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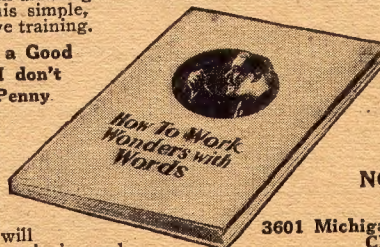
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Real Detective Tales & MYSTERY STORIES

Edited by EDWIN BAIRD

Vol. XI

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A Department of
Cryptography

Conducted by

ANDRE DE BERRI, B. Sc.



Readers who desire to join the Cryptographers' Club are requested to send their names and addresses to *Midnight Oil*, REAL DETECTIVE TALES, 1050 North LaSalle Street, Chicago. Membership is free to all readers of this magazine.

THE weeks following Pierrepont's detection of the treachery in his office were very busy ones indeed. The corps was in action on the Aisne front and everybody was getting a taste of real war. John spent most of his time at division and regimental headquarters at the front, but he usually managed to get back to corps at night.

He continued his investigation of the system by which messages had been sent from his office to the enemy. In the material that was found in Gaillard's quarters were a variety of codes, maps, and carefully coded instructions as to the channels through which messages might be sent. One of these involved the hiding of a message at a place that was now just behind our front lines. John enciphered a harmless message and put it at the designated place. Next day he found that the message was gone, and the day after he found an answer hidden at another of the designated places. Apparently the enemy had not learned of the discovery of the system. John reported this to the corps Chief of Staff at once.

The following day he was requested to report to the Commanding General, who was interested in trying out a plan for a surprise attack. The way the war was being fought made such things very difficult if not entirely impossible, and the Americans were constantly chafed under the restraint imposed by the methods that had been built up in the years of experience on the western front. The General wanted to send by one of the routes John had discovered a fake message, which would throw the enemy off guard at a point where it was desired to attack and believed this was the means by which it could be done. He took John and the Chief of Staff to one of the division headquarters, where, after a study of their maps in comparison with those John had found, they cooked up the following message:

SMYDNUAU43UGTTTTKCAAFBEMSS
IR4EGD4TAAUOFRMAAIRECSNALIWL

John delivered the message at the "post office," and next day the observers reported enemy troop movements that indicated compliance with the information that had been sent. The General then ordered an attack, without a preparatory barrage, at the point of action and a heavy barrage at a quite different point. This scheme was entirely successful and netted the most substantial gain that had been made thus far. John, who had always felt rather disgraced at the treachery he had uncovered in his own office, was highly elated at the turn affairs had taken, and reflected upon the old adage that it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

IN accordance with the frequently expressed wish of many of the club members, I have decided to give more discussion of the codes and messages that appear in this department. This will mean cutting down the length of the Pierrepont stories, as has been done in this issue. First, however, we must continue the instruction in cryptography that was begun in a recent issue. This will give the newer members the fundamental knowledge they need and enable them better to follow the discussions of the codes.

Perhaps the best way to do this is to adopt the plan proposed by Paul Napier, and seconded by several others, of giving a series of definitions. Instead of working these definitions up myself, I shall follow those given by Mons. F. Delastelle in

his very valuable *Traité Elementaire de Cryptographie*. So far as I know, no English translation has been made of this excellent treatise. This is a great misfortune, for it would make an admirable manual for our club. I advise all of you who read French to procure a copy or consult it in a library. It is a great handicap to beginning cryptographers that the best work of this sort is to be found only in French and German. E. V. T. Myszkowski's *Cryptographie Indéchiffrable*, Bazerius' *Les Chiffres Secretes Devoiles*, and the Marquis de Viari's *L'Art de Chiffrer et déchiffrer les Depeches Secretes* may also be recommended as interesting and informative. The more experienced members of the club are asked to send in the names and publishers of any books in English which they have found helpful.

And now for the definitions, which I shall string along somewhat in the form of an informal lecture. Cryptography is the science which has for its object the study of the means capable of assuring the secret of correspondence of letters which it is desired to conceal from a third person or from the indiscretion of intermediaries. In other words, cryptography teaches how to transpose plain or clear language into a secret (ciphered or figured) language. Plain or clear language (or text) is that in which all of the words of the tongue employed have their real and ordinary meaning. Secret language includes both conventional language and the ciphered or figured language. By conventional language is meant the employment of words which, while each one presents an intrinsic sense, yet, according to a convention (agreement), has a significance different from that which it has in ordinary or clear language. Ciphered or figured language is that in which one employs numbers instead of the orthographic signs (letters) used in plain language. In cryptography one designates by a figure (or cipher) the character (number, letter or any conventional sign employed to represent a letter, a word or phrase of clear text). These characters always have eventual reference to the letters of the alphabet in the sequence in which they are ordinarily used in the language employed. From these characters (figures or ciphers) comes the name cipher writing, which is often given to cryptography.

Conventions are the dispositions agreed upon between two or more persons as to the means by which a clear text may be enciphered; that is to say, transferred from a clear text to a secret one; the convention also gives the means by which the ciphered text is translated back into clear text. This last named operation is often called "deciphering"; but this is a mistake. By this term we should mean the translation of a text of which one does not know the conventions, that is, does not possess the key. The key of a cryptogram (enciphered message) is the combination of conventions which have served to encipher it: the system chosen, the manner of using it, etc. The key may sometimes be one or two words, sometimes a number, sometimes no single thing, but a combination of devices which forms the convention.

One set of conventions is included under the general head of Inversion. Inversion consists in transposing or displacing the letters of a clear text according to a key, so that those who know the key may reestablish the original order. There are several systems of inversion. (1) Reversing the letters: this consists in writing the letters of the clear text in reverse order. The

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REAL DETECTIVE TALES

AND MYSTERY STORIES

VOLUME XI, NUMBER 2

JUNE—JULY, 1927

EDWIN BAIRD, *Editor*

WHY IS A CRIMINAL?

An Editorial by EDWIN BAIRD

THERE are three questions that no man can answer: Which came first, the chicken or the egg? What happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable body? and—*Why is a criminal?*

And the most puzzling of these is the last.

Criminologists tell us that environment, not heredity, creates the criminal, that he inherits his weakness, regardless of surrounding, that he is a psychopathic case who should be sent to a hospital, that he is a cantankerous cuss who should be sent to jail, that he is this and that and the other thing, and that so-and-so and such-and-such make him what he is.

Who shall decide when experts disagree?

The popular belief is that easy money, and plenty of it, lures a man to crime, but this cannot be, for the money is neither easy nor plentiful. With the exception of some of our more prominent bootleggers, the average criminal makes less money, and makes it harder, than he would in any legitimate business, requiring no more brains or application, and certainly less risk and bodily danger. When he audits his books at the end of the year—assuming he is "at liberty" and able to do so—he finds his net profit surprisingly small.

In my newspaper days I met many criminals of different sorts, from the petty sneak thief to the big bank robber, and I can recall none who made crime pay, or who could not have done better in any honest employment. But your criminal, it seems, prefers one crooked dollar to two that are honest. I remember the case of a counterfeiter who specialized in lead nickels. Court examination disclosed that it cost him seven cents for every nickel he manufactured—and all he got for making them was a stretch in the federal penitentiary.

Even the more successful of our enterprising criminals—again excepting a few prosperous bootleggers—are playing a losing game. His "easy money" goes much easier than it comes. The dope peddler, the lawyer, the grafting politician—when these and others get through with him he has nothing left. Nothing to show for all the time, thought, shrewdness and cunning he has spent in a hazardous occupation.

Thus, observing it solely from a pecuniary viewpoint—disregarding all moral considerations—crime does not pay, and never has and never will.

Why, then, is any man a criminal?

The question remains unanswered.

What Your Penmanship Tells

Dear Mr. Derrick,
I am enclosing
a specimen of my
handwriting for
analysis.

by

ROGER DERRICK, M.A.

If you have not sent a specimen of your handwriting to Professor Derrick, do so now. It will be analyzed free of charge, and he may tell you something about your character that will prove profitable as well as interesting. If your handwriting is unusual enough it will be reproduced in this department and given special discussion. Only the initials, never the full names, of readers are given in connection with these analyses. Address all letters to Editorial Department, REAL DETECTIVE TALES, 1050 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois.

THE interest aroused among my correspondents by my recent mention of Edgar Allan Poe's "Chapter on Autography" leads me to call attention to a delightful collection of essays on the same subject which I ran across recently in some research that I was doing. The collection was published in London by one Edward Lumley in 1875 and is styled "The Art of Judging the Character of Individuals from Their Handwriting and Style." It contains one hundred and twenty specimens of handwriting of celebrities, from Mary Queen of Scots down to N. P. Willis.

The first sixty-four pages contain an essay on graphology by the editor. The Introduction is very flowery and is liberally (sometimes almost laughably) besprinkled with quotations from the poets. Mr. Lumley's style is quite "elegant." For example, when he wants to say "a look is more expressive than the happiest choice of words," he inserts an asterisk, and at the bottom of the page one finds:

"Drink to me only with thine eyes
And I will pledge with mine."

After Lumley gets settled down to the real handling of his subject he is very shrewd and occasionally graphologically inspired; but as a rule he prefers glittering generalities to scientific discussion. As a matter of fact, he was writing before such people as Preyer, Magdalene, Knutzel-Thumm, Stocker, Crepieux-Jamin, and Baughan, to mention only a few, had made a science of graphology. Lumley is not of the caliber of an original investigator, and his object in getting out this book, as he says in his preface, was to take advantage of a recent wave of interest in the subject. Nevertheless he was a good observer and had the makings of a really good graphologist.

He begins by trying to answer many such objections to graphology as I find in my mail today: why one writes differently at different times; the effect of anger and other strong emotions on the handwriting; the differentiation of a man's and a woman's writing; and many others. He makes a bold attempt to answer the last question I have mentioned, but finally lapses into the statement concerning women that "To the restraint natural to them is added a delicacy in the formation of letters and a gracefulness in the strokes of the pen, which accord perfectly with their

usual good taste." Very polite, and assuredly written in the time of the good Queen Victoria; but hardly scientific! As a matter of fact, he is here tackling a question the answer to which I have seen in the writings of no graphologist, nor have I heard any reputable graphologist say that he knew in all cases how to distinguish between the writing of a man and that of a woman. There are many more or less theoretical distinctions, but they break down in practice; and from what I learn of psychology and anthropology there seems to be no good reason why there should exist any hard and fast and thoroughgoing distinction.

Lumley's comments on the specimens that accompany his own section of the book are very interesting and show the knowledge and insight of a discerning but unscientific graphologist. He very seldom gives a hint of the indications from which he makes his pronouncements; however, in contrasting the writing of the famous courtesan, Madame de Maintenon, with that of the famous letter writer, Madame de Sevigné, he remarks: "There is in the first more of simplicity, strength and dignity. In the second, although we at first notice *the sharpness of the letters* (my italics), we discover much more lightness, facility, grace and ease." The contrast is quite just when you reflect that the Maintenon for years tyrannized over a king rather as a martinet than as a mistress, and that the Sevigné, inspired by a veritable passion for her only daughter, wrote some of the most charming letters that have ever been penned. The graphological element that Lumley has in mind is certainly that of angularity as contrasted with graceful roundness and his inference is well justified.

In the second part of his own contribution to this collection, Lumley goes into a classification of various writers (meaning literary men) by analysis of their styles and thus gets farther than ever away from scientific graphology. The remaining hundred pages of the book are taken up with more or less amateurish essays on graphology by William Seller, M. D. and F. R. C. P. E. (whatever that is), Stephen Collett, M. A., the great D'Israeli, Sir John Sinclair, Vigneul Marville, Edgar Allan Poe, and J. C. Lavater. Skeptics about graphology will be delighted with the Seller essay and graphologists will be amused at his attempt to work out a system on the basis of the outworn "humour" system of physiology (he claims ability to distinguish between the writing of blondes and that of brunettes!). The Poe essay seems to be a selection from the one I have already told you about. The Lavater essay is the one in which this pioneer discusses the significance of design and coloring in painting and arrives at the basis of his analysis of the significant features of handwriting. It is worth while to quote his final statement:

(Continued on page 70)

This is the twenty-second of a series of articles on graphology, written exclusively for REAL DETECTIVE TALES by Prof. Derrick. The twenty-third will appear in the next issue. Back copies of the magazine containing the articles previously published will be mailed to any address by the publisher for 25c each.

A Story of Crafty Rogues, a Keen-witted Girl,

Danger Ahead!

A Dramatic Short Novel

By
HARRY
MILLARD
LYNCH

When kidnapers abduct a noted millionaire, shrewder than all of them, and try to bleed him for \$300,000, what happens? This story answers the question—and the answer fairly takes your breath. . . . Here we have something of wide appeal, something that peculiarly grips your interest: An atmosphere of hidden danger, of secret plotting, and suspense and mystery and tense expectation of untoward things about to happen—and things *do* happen aplenty! Amazing, unexpected things that ring with realism and key your emotions to a high pitch. . . . Altogether, an uncommonly good story by an uncommonly good writer.—E. B.



"NOW!" Jordan's voice grated the warning. My part of the job was coming.

Down the road was a blur of light, and in five minutes, or three, the car would reach us, and I would kidnap Andrew Mills and hold him for ransom, or I would fail to kidnap Andrew Mills and be shot. One way or another, the thing would shortly be over.

Jordan faded somewhere into the shadows, and with his going I realized how much I had been leaning upon his dependable courage. It was lone hand now, and the car was nearer.

I gripped the automatic and waited.

Who are the mighty ones of earth, modern barons who sit in judgment, dispensing the high justice, the middle and the low? They are little gray men with still faces and cold eyes. They dress in faultless clothes, sit silently in business conferences, lost in their big leather chairs. They never raise their voices, but they rule the world. Little men—men like Andrew Mills.

So we, the three of us, were going to kidnap this man, hold him for ransom, and gain wealth thereby. It had seemed an idea, that afternoon a week earlier, when we had hatched the thing out.

"But it won't be easy," warned Banion.

"Can't boot the thing," Jordan supplemented. "Once we start we've got to go through, and get clear. Other-

wise—" He stopped there, but we knew what he meant, fast enough. "What say, Jerry? You're educated."

Me, I couldn't see it. Not then.

"Where's the danger?" I demanded. "If it flops, it flops. But this Mills, he's rich, and busy. The most he'd do and the worst he'd do would be to turn the case over to some detective agency. They'd stall around a while and collect their fee. That's all."

"Might collect us, too."

"And might not! Can't you see? We're nobody, nondescript—average, all about thirty, all ordinary looking. Any of us could double for John Doe. Besides, he'll see only one of us."

All that was, as I have said, a week before, on a rainy April afternoon. We had gathered in Jordan's room down by the railroad yards to hatch the thing out. Talking interminably, suggesting, objecting, weighing this thing against that, speculating on our chances, our possible gains. What price ten years in prison, what price the chair? As fine a trio of ruffians as you will find, and we were determined to get some portion of the great Andrew Mills' gold.

"How do you mean, he'll see only one of us?" Banion demanded.

"What's the use of all of us taking a chance? We'll

a Wily Millionaire—and Red Gold and Ransom

Illustrations by
Andrew Bensen



Before I could lift a hand, before I could even summon my senses to understand the thing, Banion had writhed from Jordan's clutch, and his automatic blazed twice . . .

all be in it, of course, but one man's plenty to stay with him after we've got him. Only one of the three will run much risk of identification."

"Yeh! And who bells the cat?"

Silence. None of us craved that job. "Settle it by lot," offered Jordan at last.

"We might cut cards," suggested Banion.

"Not!" Banion was too proficient with cards, and Jordan considered. "See here," he said, and he pointed through the grimy window to the railroad freight tunnel in the yards below, "if the next engine to come out of that hole carries an even number, I'm out; odd, Jerry's out, and the two men left bet again."

"Puts me in either way," objected Banion.

"All right, then you and Jerry take the first chance."

"But you live in this dump," said Banion. "For all I know all of 'em may have odd numbers."

"Take either end of it, then. How about it, Jerry?"

"Fair enough."

"Odd," Banion decided. But his face was white and working. Banion was no man for this business, even though the plan was of his devising.

SO we gathered, a hard faced crew, at the window.

"Just how's this stealing to be done?" said Banion, his voice very near a whimper.

"That's to be decided by the man that's stuck."

"But, listen, if it's me—"

Freight engine 1229 rumbled into view.

Banion gave a shuddering sigh of relief. "Let's me out."

"Odd or even, Jerry?" asked Jordan.

"Your choice."

"Odd she is, for a repeater," and almost on the word the second engine puffed into the yard—No. 423.

"Seems to put the bee on you, Jerry."

I nodded. Either Jordan or I, it didn't much matter, but Banion couldn't have carried it through. Not that I wanted it. "What about this Andrew Mills, Banion? This is your party, what's the dope?"

"Well, he's a millionaire, one of the big furniture crowd here in Grand River. He's a little guy, wears eye glasses, a bachelor, and filthy with money."

"Yes."

"And he's important to a lot of important people."

"We already know all that. What else?"

"He's got offices on the tenth floor of the Corporate Life

Building, and you get to his private office—"

"That's out. I can't steal him from his desk."

"He plays golf some at the Pine Hills Country Club, and lots of times he goes around alone."

"Might be something in that," I reflected. "Always use the same caddie?"

You see, it was Banion's business to know these things. He had brought us into the plan on the strength of his information concerning Andrew Mills. How he got that information we did not know, nor did we care, but he claimed to have it, wherefore I questioned him. For the rest, Banion possessed the courage of a caterpillar and the soul of a rat. We had to use him, and he could not move without us. "How about his caddie?"

"Not so good. His chauffeur, as a rule."

"As a rule?"

"Well, always, as far as I know."

There it was, a chauffeur who was also a bodyguard. I pondered this darkly.

"What else?"

"The rest of the time he works."

"And a millionaire!" said Jordan softly.

"Work's the millionaire's regular dish. It seems to

me, Banion," I remonstrated peevishly, "that you haven't got this thing set up at all. I thought you said you had a complete plan."

"Couldn't we decoy him away—a letter or telephone call, or something?"

Jordan laughed. "Even you've got more sense than that, Banion. What's *your* notion?"

"Why, he takes a drive every night, along about ten o'clock, I've followed him three-four times in a taxicab."

"In the same taxicab?"

"Of course not, I got a different man each time."

"Well?"

"He always takes the same route, out past Pine Hills, then along Watson Drive, and back by the state highway."

Jordan looked up with interest. "How does he get to the highway from Watson Drive?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know!"

"Do you guys know what taxicabs cost? I only trailed him long enough to be sure what road he took out of town, then I came back and watched his house, how come I know he comes back by the state highway."

WELL, of course, taxicabs were expensive, and we were all pretty low in funds. But Jordan was thinking.

"It's three miles from Watson Drive to the state highway," he said, "and all of the cut-over roads out that way are unimproved. Might be a chance there, Jerry."

Jordan gained his living rum-running, and his knowledge of roads, of cross cuts and byways, was profound. "What time does he get back, Banion?"

"He's gone about an hour."

"Drive fast?"

"No—twenty-five or so."

"Then I know where he crosses—where he *must* cross. It's a narrow dirt road, and we can get him there."

"*We?*" Banion asked blankly.

"Certainly," I put in. "I'll be the only man he gets a good look at, but this is a three-man job. There's the chauffeur to be handled, and Mills himself. I suppose we've got to stick up the car, unless I can think of a better plan."

"Maybe there is a better plan," said Jordan reflectively. "There's a stretch about midway along that road that's narrow—too narrow for a car to turn. You're a dynamiter, Banion?"

Banion regarded him flatly for a long minute. "I know how it's used," he said finally.

"Could you wreck a culvert without making too much noise?"

"How much noise?"

"Without rousing the farmers. I don't mean blow the thing over the trees, but wreck it so a car couldn't cross."

"Yes, I can do it."

"It'll have to be done just before he gets there, because otherwise the road will be blocked to traffic. And we've got to figure out some way of keeping other cars off the road for an hour or so. What say, Jerry?"

And so, by ways devious and dark, bit by bit we built it. Banion conceived a plan for leaving the big car helpless, and at the same time avoiding the danger of dynamite. It was Jordan, the business man, who had the thought of impersonating a farmer, and leading the chauffeur away to a non-existent telephone. And again it was Banion, the cunning, who devised the simple expedient of freeing the road from other traffic.

And I was the man chosen, by lot and by unanimous vote of my gentle friends, to do the actual kidnapping—the dirty work, as the good old phrase has it.

We were all riff-raff, well equipped for work of this kind, each according to his own talents. The idea, such as it was, belonged to Banion, and his weazel craftiness was needful. Jordan was in on three counts—he was utterly without moral standards, as were all of us, he was practical, and he owned an old but powerful liquor car.

For myself, I trust that this chronicle will have made it clear that I was believed by my felonious associates to be a person of some slight education and, not to put too precious a point on it, even finesse.

I knew little of Jordan, except that he had seen better times. He had started life as a 'bus boy, had become waiter, head waiter, restaurant proprietor and had, for a dizzying few months, conducted a very gay and very shady night club, but he had affiliated with the wrong crowd at the wrong time, had sought protection from the wrong people, and had at last been snuffed out by competition quite as alert and unscrupulous as big business itself can boast. He had hung to the edge of quasi-respectability for a little while by his finger tips, and had at last let go. Jordan would do anything.

The possessions of Banion were these: An abject cowardice, a small and wiry body, catlike cunning and, deep in his dark and twisted soul, a shining and beautiful shrine. For, somewhere in the background of his life, Banion had a sister, younger than he, and probably the only decent woman he had ever known.

In all other possible respects he was as poisonous a bit of vermin as the city's underworld could boast, but, with all his cowardice, he would fight like a terrier at the mere breath of suspicion against her. None of us had ever seen her, none of us knew where he kept her.

"My business," said Banion darkly to a too-inquisitive questioner one night. "And keep your trap shut! You're not fit to mention her, and you're not fit to think of her. Another word, you big bum, and I'll cut that tongue out of your head." And the little coward, then and there, would have terribly done it.

So much for Banion, and for Jordan. My own case is hardly so meritorious.

Thus we decided to kidnap Andrew Mills.

CHAPTER TWO

SO it was a week later, on a fine moonlit night in April, that Jordan and I waited in the dappled shadows of the cut-over road. This was the simple plan of ambuscade:

Item, Jordan's car, carefully parked in the brush.

Item, Both ends of the dirt road had been closed to traffic by the expedient of placing a warning placard, "Road Under Repair," and the hanging of a red lantern on a post. We desired no audience.

Item, At the south end, from which Mills was expected to approach, Banion was in waiting. His business there required a certain nicety. He was to gauge the time as nearly as possible, and have both placard and warning light out of sight when Mills' car arrived. Once the car had turned into the road, he would post his signals and go about other duties. On no account must any other car be allowed into the trap. And that was all.

Not quite all, for the trap itself deserves a word. I had said that we discarded the thought of dynamite, and had hit upon an easier and more effective plan. An hour's work had resulted in a trench across the road at its narrowest part—not deep, but with sheer walls, and this pitfall had been screened by a few flimsy boards and some loose gravel. It was a reasonably sure thing that the front wheels of the car would drop into the

trench before the chauffeur could save himself, and, once there, the car would not move for some time.

Of course, Mills might not come this evening. No matter; we could set a trap as simple as this night after night, but Banion had declared that this ride was his regular practice.

And come he did.

Jordan and I were standing in the shadow of the trees. Apart from our villainy, we had little in common, and neither of us had spoken for many minutes.

I looked at my watch mechanically. "After ten," I said, and my throat felt like old parchment.

"Car coming!" Jordan spoke in a whisper. "Now!"

There was a glow through the trees, and I caught my breath. In a minute—two minutes, the thing would be upon us.

"Gun ready?"

"Of course."

And then the lights of the car blazed along the rutted road.

Jordan had disappeared somewhere into the night. My heart was hitting a hundred to the minute, and I would have cheerfully given the little I possessed to have been well out of the thing. To slip quietly away in the woods, and keep going, never to see Jordan again, or Banion, or any of the shady fraternity with whom I had foregathered these last months. But I had long ago betrayed the decencies of life, and now I could not be doubly craven. I steeled myself and waited.

For I had fancied that there might be zest and adventure in crime, something swashbuckling and gallant, something that lifted one, however unworthily, out of oneself, but this, our crafty plans, our hiding, our stealth and caution, was merely mean and degrading.

The car was proceeding slowly, the lights picking out every detail of the road, but our work had been well done, even to rolling the spare tire over the gravel falsework. So there was no hesitancy, no slacking of pace. Suddenly the car lurched, swayed, and, without further warning, the front wheels jolted down into the trench with a sharp cracking of boards and an exclamation from the chauffeur.

Not my cue; I shrank further back into the shadows.

THE chauffeur was out in an instant, trim and alert in his whipcord uniform, and somehow formidable. He played a flashlight on the wheels, made a careful examination, and then called:

"Afraid we're stuck, sir; we've dropped into a ditch."

"Can you get us out, Oscar?"

"No, sir, not without a lot of digging, and even then I might strip the gears."

And then Jordan came strolling down the road in his overalls and blue jumper, a barn lantern over his arm.

"Hey, you with the lantern!" Oscar called. "Live around here?"

"Back up the road a ways. Stuck?"

"Why wasn't there any barricade here, any light or warning?"

"Couldn't say. Road's supposed to be closed till the supervisor gets a tile across here."

"Well, it wasn't closed. Got a team?"

"Sure."

"Get it! Ten dollars for getting us out at once."

"Not my team, exactly. Belongs to my brother-in-law; we live together."

"I don't care whose team it is; get it and jerk us out."

"But I'm not goin' home." The whole essence of the ruse lay in removing the chauffeur from the scene. "I'm buyin' some hogs, and I got to meet a man down the road."

All you have to do is to go back about a half mile, first house on your right, and my brother-in-law'll take care of you. Name's Fletcher, and he'll do it easy for five dollars. Good-night!" And Jordan moved away.

The chauffeur started to speak, changed his mind, started after the retreating figure for a moment, and then turned to the dark interior.

"Back in fifteen minutes, sir."

"As quickly as possible, Oscar," said

Andrew Mills. "The train leaves at eleven, you know."

"Right, sir!" And the chauffeur strode off into the darkness.

Now!

So far our plan had worked perfectly. Our mouse was in the trap, which was closed to chance passers-by. The chauffeur was gone on a wild-goose chase, would be gone for a half hour, and perhaps longer. Jordan, I knew, would be at the wheel of his own car, waiting. I cut back through the trees and came into the road in the glare of the lights.

All that remained was to seize the person of Andrew Mills, by craft if possible, by force if needs must, and take him to Jordan.

Mills had perhaps two minutes to scrutinize me as I walked toward the car, but there was no help for it, and I did not greatly care. If we wrung from this man half of the sum we hoped for I could put myself far from his reach forever.

Contrasted to the strong lights of the car, the interior was in utter darkness. I stopped in apparent surprise, looked at the buried front wheels and called.

"Anybody in there?"

"Yes," said Mills quietly, "we've had an accident."

"Perhaps I can help."

"I believe not, thanks."

"Have you called anyone?"

"My chauffeur is on an errand now."

Just a voice coming out of the void. It was like talking against a wall. I most earnestly wanted to see this man, to get my hands on him, to get the thing over and



A shadow moved forward, slowly

done with. And something might bring the chauffeur back, minutes counted.

"My own car is parked down the road a bit, be glad to give you a lift."

"Hardly necessary, thanks."

STILL I shrank from physical combat. He had spoken to Oscar about a train at eleven, and I knew he wanted to be getting back. Men who acquire millions also acquire caution, but I took another track.

"I don't know who you may be, but my name is Robert Holden, broker's clerk with Bartow and Spencer in the city. I'm driving in now, and if I can be of assistance—send back a wrecking crew, say—I'll be glad to do it."

A shot in the dark, literally, but nothing is ever lost. Out of his surprising knowledge Banion had supplied me with all sorts of odds and ends of information concerning this man, and I had mentally filed it for future need. I knew that Bartow and Spencer handled most of his brokerage business. And I knew that Robert Holden, with whom I had been slightly acquainted in college, had worked with them for some years. There was an off chance that Mills might know Holden, but it was hardly probable.

"I've heard of Mr. Holden," returned the voice, somewhat less reserved in tone. "I occasionally transact a little business with Bartow and Spencer. Been with them some little while, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir; three years." Again I was speaking by the book. "Went there the year I graduated from Swarthgate."

"Then you may know of me—my name is Mills."

"Not Andrew Mills!"

"Yes."

"That certainly puts it up to me to do something," I replied heartily. "Better jump in my car and let me run you into town, Mr. Mills."

"Thanks. I believe I will," and Mills alighted on the word. He was, as I had said, a little man, perhaps fifty, but he had the erect carriage, the snap and vigor of youth. "Where is your car, Mr. Holden?"

"A few steps up the road. We lost a hub cap," I explained glibly, "and I was casting back, looking for it, but it doesn't matter." And we set off together.

So I had done it! Not only done it, but painlessly, bloodlessly, and, I felt, with something of a flourish.

Jordan was at the wheel, in the darkness, his hat pulled over his eyes. Mills looked up quickly.

"Friend of mine," I explained casually. "Forgot to mention him. He's driving."

"I see."

It was hard to know just how much he saw. We were at the car now, and I dropped a pace behind. Jordan reached back and swung the rear door wide.

"Step in, Mr. Mills."

But as I spoke Mills hesitated, and my hands reached to throttle him. Before the act could be accomplished he had turned. "Forgot to leave a note for the chauffeur—back in a minute," and he was running lightly down the road.

"Get him!" snapped Jordan, and I heard him curse.

But I didn't run. A slow rage was welling up within me as I walked steadily and without haste after the millionaire. I knew, with a dreadful certainty that had in it something of elation, that I would bring Andrew Mills back—bleeding and insensible, perhaps, but bring him, certainly.

It was at this point, I think, that I became criminal. Up to the moment it had been play-acting, there had been a sense of jest, of unreality, but now it was all changed. Whatever my weaknesses, evasions, cowardices, suddenly I was a thug, aroused and dangerous.

But when I reached the car Andrew Mills was quietly writing, using the fender as a desk. He had torn a leaf from a note book, and was covering it with microscopic script. In a moment he snapped it under the throttle of the steering wheel and turned to me with a smile.

"At your service, Mr. Holden. I told the chauffeur that friends were taking me in, and for him to follow at his leisure."

So, thug and victim, we set off amicably.

Mills entered the rear seat without demur, and Jordan, who had the engine running, went swiftly and bumpily down the road. Nothing was said. When we reached the highway a figure emerged from the dark, swung the barricade aside to allow us to pass, and then restored the warning signal. This was Banion, again according to plan, but he did not enter the car. We would have need of Banion in town.

"Another friend?" asked Mills softly—too softly.

"Yes."

"Ah!"

When we turned away from the city he spoke no word, though now, of course, he knew. I was ready for remonstrances, abuse, trouble, but he sat quietly in his place, his hands placidly folded. We drove endlessly, silently, through the night.

After a long while he spoke.

"Mr.—ah—Holden?"

"Yes?"

"Is it murder or merely abduction?"

CHAPTER THREE

IN ten minutes more we had reached the water's edge.

Mills entered the launch silently. I started the little outboard motor and prepared to shove off.

"Got everything?" asked Jordan.

"Everything."

"When do you expect to get a letter out?"

"Tomorrow; you'll be advised."

"But if you shouldn't put it over by tomorrow?"

"Then the next day, or the next, or the one following—plenty of time."

"Don't you believe it!" Jordan's whisper shrilled through the dark. "This man's important, and there'll be a fine stir. We've got to do this quickly. Make him come across!"

I nodded and left him in the sputtering *put-put* of my motor. My job from now on, and conversation didn't help.

The little motor boat chugged steadily for the space of a half hour. Andrew Mills said no word, but stared at me long and curiously.

There were emergency oars in the boat, and my own hands were busy with the tiller. He might have clouted me over the head, or at least have made a good attempt. He might have blinded me with a cascade of water from the bailing tin. He might have taken his chance in open battle and have had fair success on our treacherous and restricted footing, but he did none of these things. He gazed thoughtfully at the water slipping past and held his peace.

On we went through the night, and at last, looming as a denser blackness against the black water, we came to Companion Island. I cut off the motor and brought the boat gently to rest at the landing stage.

"We get out here."

Without a word, Mills stepped to the stage and stood waiting.

I guided him up the path by the light of an electric lantern, and we entered the cottage. We had seen to it, we three, that the place was in readiness—a fire, for the night had gone chill, and the house swept and clean.

Mills warmed himself at the hearth while I lit a kerosene lamp, gazing curiously about him. There seemed to be no anger in the little man, no resentment, and certainly no fear.

"It's past two o'clock," I offered. "Your bedroom is there. You'll find sleeping things, and a shaving kit, toothbrush and so on. The door will be locked, but I'll be within call."

"Abduction, eh?"

"Exactly."

He nodded and went composedly to his room. "Good-night," I called as he closed the door.

There was no answer.

I did not immediately retire, for there were certain things to be done. Mills' door to be locked, the gasoline drained from the outboard motor and the oars carefully hidden, a walk under the stars over the little island, to make certain that we had no visitors. It was graying dawn before I sought bed, and then I slept badly.

It was about nine when I opened Mills' door and looked in, to find him shaved, dressed, sitting in the one chair in the room and gazing placidly at the lake through the iron bars of his window.

"Breakfast is ready. Slept well, I hope?"

"Thanks," he said dryly.

IN my younger days I had gone on many a casual camping expedition, and simple cookery held no terrors. It was a decent and appetizing meal, one that my unemotional captive seemed to find enjoyable. When he had quite finished I laid the thing before him.

"This is a case of kidnapping, Mr. Mills, for a ransom."

He nodded, and waited.

"We are," I continued, "a body of several desperate men, all more or less criminal, all more or less involved. We want money, a large sum of money, and we want it at once."

"What is a large sum of money?"

"We demand three hundred thousand dollars."

"Three of you!"

"I'm not saying how many there may be."

"Yourself, the thug that drove the car, and the man who closed the road—that's three. You wouldn't take any more than necessary into this thing."

"Very well, three, and we want three hundred thousand."

"How will you go about it?"

"That's for you to say. The money must be paid within three days, and you'll know the method of getting it."

"Let me make your position clear," I continued. "There are hundreds of islands along this shore of the lake, and nobody ever comes here at this season. This one belongs to a man who is in Europe. He doesn't know that we are using it, and nobody else knows. Except for a few freighters, navigation won't open for two months. So far as being discovered goes, we can stay here until summer."

"But if I don't try to get the money—what then?"

"You will try."

"Manhandling, I suppose?"

"Not necessary. You are too important, too essential to big affairs. Before you would stay here two months you would give several times three hundred thousand. All I need to do is to sit tight."

He stared at me for a long moment.

"You are not prepared, I suppose, to accept a smaller sum?"

"No," I said doggedly. "If we can get anything we can get three hundred thousand."

"Your share would be one third?"

"We were going to divide equally."

"Suppose," he faced me squarely, "suppose I should agree here and now to give you a hundred fifty thousand. I have only to identify myself at the nearest bank to command it, and I will pay the money into your hands as soon as we get to the mainland. You can be half across the world before your—er—accomplices learn of it, and they'll never be certain just what happened. Is it a deal?"

I shook my head.

"Not honorable," I had the grace to redden when I said that, but it was the truth, in a way.

He laughed shortly.

"What am I to do?"

"Write the kind of letter that will get the money."

"Suppose I refuse?"

"Then I'll write a letter—to your attorneys, or your bankers, or both. It will take a little longer, that way, but in the end it will be successful."

"They might not accept your word."

"Oh, they'll believe it. You are missing, you see, and I can send them your clothes, private papers and what not for evidence."

"And if you don't get it?"

"I'll get it. You are too important to too many people. They'll pay out your money cheerfully enough to get you back to making more money for them."

HE regarded me with grim amusement. "My own thought," he said at last, "and I never fight as long as I can compromise. Give me pen and paper."

He wrote busily for two or three minutes while I paced the floor. Then he looked up.

"How is this money to be sent? I take it that you won't accept a check."

"I'll dictate that part." This was a detail of the plan that had caused us much thought, for always, in every case of ransom, there must be a point of contact, the delivery of the ransom by some one to some one, and it is here that the greatest danger lies.

"Say this," I commanded: "New bills will not be accepted, and every bill will be scrutinized with a magnifying glass—"

"Not so fast."

I waited.

"All right."

"With a magnifying glass to determine whether there are any secret marks."

"All right."

"No denominations of more than one hundred dollars."

"All right."

"The money is to be placed in a small cask, tightly sealed . . ."

"In a small what!"

"Cask—a little barrel."

"Oh!"

"Tightly sealed, and the cask is to be dropped from an airplane . . ."

"How's that?"

"Dropped from an airplane on the morning of Friday next."

"That's the day after tomorrow."

"Yes. Here's the rest of it: The airplane, unescorted, will leave the east shore of the lake near the town of Ludington at exactly nine o'clock Friday morning. The pilot will fly in a southwesterly direction not more than a thousand feet up. When he is ten minutes out he will drop the cask, and will proceed across the lake, landing at Milwaukee."

"That's all. End it any way that you think fit, any way that will insure delivery of the money. I might

say that one man will be posted at Ludington, and another at Milwaukee, and if the airship has an escort, if any strange boats are seen about the lake, and if the pilot fails to proceed directly to Milwaukee the cask will not be touched. We will contrive some other way, and the ransom goes up another hundred thousand."

"And just how do I know that I will be set at liberty?"

"You don't know! As a matter of fact, you will be held for twenty-four hours, just to make certain of no further trouble, then will be released, but you'll have to take my word for that."

"Trust to that honor of yours again, eh?"

"Exactly," I said shortly. "Now let's see what you have written."

He handed me the letter. It ran:

"My dear Charlie: As we suspected, I am held for ransom. The men who hold me say they will release me for three hundred thousand dollars. I particularly do not want publicity. See whether you can find negotiable securities in my private box in safety deposit, and notify the office only under pressure. In the event that you need help, secure Mr. Robert Holden, but pledge him to secrecy. Follow instructions given below, which have just been dictated by the chief brigand."

There followed the paragraph I had dictated, and the signature.

I READ this note carefully, and could see in it no code, no threat. It seemed a straightforward attempt to get the money, as quietly as possible. To this extent it was exactly what we wanted, but—to a woman!

I stuffed it into an envelope.

"Address it."

He wrote across the face:

Mrs. Andrew Mills,
Central Parkway,
Grand River, Michigan
Personal and Private.

But Banion, who had seemed to know everything about Mills, had said he was a bachelor, had said it many times, and for that matter, all the world knew it.

"But you're a bachelor."

"It would appear otherwise."

"We didn't know that you were married."

"Tear the letter up, and dictate another."

"Well, of course—but, anyway, there are some other things that want explaining."

"Such as?"

"This Robert Holden—who's he?"

He permitted himself a wintry smile. "Formerly a broker's clerk, now my office manager."

"Oh!"

"Precisely."

"Then you knew—you suspected—"

"I am not altogether a fool! From the first it was pretty apparent that the whole thing was a trap. Road supervisors don't dig trenches and cover them with boards and gravel. I have been over that road many times, and there's no house a half mile from the culvert, where Oscar was directed."

"Yet you let him go. If you knew there was to be trouble, why not put up a fight?"

"Because my wife was with me, and I couldn't afford a fight."

"Your wife! In the car!"

"I whispered to her that the thing looked bad, before you came up, claiming to be a man that you could not be. And I made an excuse as soon as I was certain, ran back to the car and told her what was up. She used

sense—she didn't scream, and she didn't faint. Add that to the other things you overlooked, and think about them."

A deserved taunt. I pondered long and deeply, and in the end I decided to mail the letter as it stood. For all of our errors, there didn't appear to have been any damage done. For the life of me I couldn't see how the existence of a wife, which we had not suspected, and the fact of her knowledge of the affair could change things. It seemed to make success more certain.

"I am going to the city to mail this letter," I said abruptly. "And I'll trouble you for your clothes."

"My clothes!"

"Yes. I'll take the motor boat, of course, and with you naked, I can trust you to stay in the cottage. You're not to parade along the beach looking for a stray fisherman. Your clothes, please, and you'll be locked in as well. There's plenty to eat, and I'll get back when I can."

He looked dangerous enough, and it seemed that we were certain to have it out, then and there, but in the end, as shamefaced as a school boy, with I know not what murder in his heart, he stripped. In ten minutes I was in the motor boat, chugging toward the shore.

Not satisfied wholly with things, not certain that our plans would carry. Filled with a dull apprehension, across which there flashed now and then the forked lightning of panic. The furies are the bedfellows of the wicked, I have found, and they were with me now.

And his wife. What was she like? I wondered.

I was soon to know.

CHAPTER FOUR

"I DON'T like it," said Jordan flatly.

In his dingy room in the dingy hotel he stared at me over Andrew Mills' letter to his wife. I had mailed the original some hours before and had gone to Jordan with a copy. And Jordan was far from satisfied.

"I'm afraid of it," he went on. "It's all too easy—too devilishly, sickeningly easy. And this letter—there's trouble wrapped up in this letter."

"All right, tell me what to have him write, and I think I can make him do it. But we can't recall this thing."

"I don't mean that, exactly. I mean this thing about his wife, and her being there when we stopped the car, and now he's writing to her."

"Why not? If she cares anything about him it will mean we get the money. Better to her than his bankers."

"But he *hasn't* any wife!" Jordan cried impatiently. "He's been a bachelor all his life. Banion said so, and Banion knows all about him."

"Mills should know as much about that as Banion. Where is Banion?"

"Don't know what's become of the little crook, but I expect him any time. He knew we were going to meet here."

"I want to see him. I want to ask him more about that information of his. Seems to me—"

And then Banion came into the room.

We hadn't heard footsteps in the uncarpeted corridor, and we hadn't heard the door open. Simply, and miraculously, Banion was there. It came, I suppose, from long experience in sneak thievery, and it showed a high degree of craftsmanship.

Jordan, who was looking at the letter, read it aloud. Banion listened indifferently. "It's all right, fine!" he said.

"But it's addressed to his wife."

"Wife? He's a bachelor."

(Continued on page 76)

Wedding Guests *A Story of Three Dramatic Episodes*

By PAUL DERESCO AUGSBURG

The wedding march from *Lohengrin*, broadcast by the First Regiment Band; an old couple at home, mourning the loss of a wayward daughter; two police officers discussing "the biggest bootlegger on the North Side"; Margaret, the disillusioned small town girl, drinking gin in a garish city apartment—and all listening in on a "radio wedding" . . . And then the crack of a gun and the reek of burnt gunpowder—and Jim Conroy, the bootlegger, lay dying on the floor, with Margaret standing over him, a smoking revolver in her hand. . . . It's a poignant story that Augsburg has written, a story rich with human interest, with high lights and shadows, with pathos and comedy, with humor and tragedy—with the raw essence of life. A mosaic story ingeniously wrought.—E. B.

"DO you, Phillip, take Lucille to be your wedded wife, to have and to hold, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health . . ."

There was a prolonged squawk of static, but it cleared in time for Mrs. Rall to hear a man's voice almost defiantly say, "I do." Then, scarcely more than a minute later, the First Regiment Band crashed onto the air with the *Lohengrin* wedding march, and Mrs. Rall's headphones fairly jumped with the blare of brasses.

The band was followed by the voice of the announcer. His station, he said, had been radiocasting direct from the Coliseum, where the National Food Show was in progress. They had just heard Phillip Grundle and Lucille Somers, both of Maplehurst, Ill., made man and wife by the Rev. K. J. Burt.

The announcer neglected to add that, for participating in this feature of the food show, the young couple had received as wedding presents two crates of Sweet Afton brand canned goods, three Lundy's picnic hams, an I. C. Patent refrigerator, and one Cooxdelite combination sausage grinder and potato parer.

There had been tears in Mrs. Rall's eyes as she listened to the ceremony. She had sobbed when the band played its triumphant processional of Hymen. John Rall, returning from the store, found her crying in the old plush-covered rocking chair. The headphones lay on the floor, where in bitter anguish she had thrown them.

"Come, ma; that ain't no way. . . . They're married now, I reckon?"

"Man and wife," sniffed Mrs. Rall. "I heard the preacher just as plain! And the band; John, there was a big band to play the wedding march!"

"A regular band!" murmured the merchant and added a soft exclamation. Perhaps he had a fleeting remembrance of their own wedding, thirty-eight years ago; of the wheezing parlor organ with its broken vox humana stop; of Miss Manilla Purdy frowning as she battled with the keyboard. But she had been victorious, Miss Purdy: she had bent the old organ to her will, had made it yield up measures of an unmistakable march. Poor Miss Manilla Purdy, her frustrated life long ended, a virgin beneath a headstone!

John Rall sat down beside his wife and took her hand. It had been a good wedding, his and Clara's; a good wedding and a fruitful life together. Just like a well-matched team. The mortgage had been raised; their hardware store had prospered; for the seventh time John Rall had been elected to the school board. There had been five fine children, too—William, Veronica, Marcia, Thomas N. . . . and Margaret.

And Margaret! John Rall's fingers tightened on his wife's. If it had been Marcia or even Veronica he would not, perhaps, have felt so bad; but the youngest, the baby of the family, who had been just a little flower girl when her brother William was married—it seemed doubly hard to have *her* the wanderer, the only wild one in the brood.

And she might have been Mrs. Phillip Grundle, a bride tonight, wearing the wedding band that Lucille now wore on her finger! John Rall shook his head. A fine man, Phil Grundle; a girl couldn't do much better. A little sot in his ways, perhaps, but a good, shrewd, thrifty farmer, with some of the likeliest land in the county. Not much to look at, perhaps; but shucks, what does a girl care for the looks of a man's face, anyway?

Well, now, perhaps some girls *do* care. Margy had been different from the others. A kind of frivolous, dissatisfied, *ungodly* little vixen. Take Marcia, for instance, or even her sister Veronica; if either of them had been engaged to a man like Phillip Grundle, do you suppose for a minute they'd have treated him like a sort of joke, poked fun at him in public, and finally left him flat, without so much as a little word?

It's because she was so pretty, John supposed. Besides, being the baby, they'd all of them rather spoiled her. Where Marcia and Veronica had to do lots of work around the house, Margy was allowed to read and play. That reading hadn't been any too good for her, John decided—those movie magazines, for instance, and all the crazy "true" love stories.

That reading had put funny notions into her pretty little head. It had made her dissatisfied with a good, shrewd, thrifty man like Phil—as good a catch as a girl could ever hope for. And then, when that covered truck got mired near the Millbank crossing, and the dressed-up fellow with the yellow roadster came to Jed's for help, and Margaret went down with her uncle and the team—then, because of her reading and other foolishness, she had to lose her head over him, a stranger.

Well, perhaps James Conroy was making her just as good a husband as Phil Grundle would've. John hadn't any call to condemn him. He seemed to be prosperous enough, riding in his yellow roadster ahead of his covered truck. And Jed said he paid him handsome for getting it out of the mud. Smoked cigarettes through a little stem, Jed had added dubiously.

Yes, he was just as likely as not making Margy a mighty fine husband. Still, if she'd married Phil they'd have *known* how it went with her. The least she could do was write them and say that all was well. Why, John wasn't even certain what town his daughter lived in.

Wild, foolish little Margy! Here she hardly knew the man, and off she goes and marries him! Promised to Phil, with a ring on her finger and the wedding date all set—and then she takes up with a stranger! "Jim Conroy and I were just married. Tell Phil, and don't you worry." Now, imagine! A covered truck happens to get mired near the Millbank crossing, and Margy goes down with her uncle, and three days later she sends them this message from Decatur!

It was the last they had heard from Margy. And that was more than a year ago.

"Fifteen months, come Monday," said John, unconsciously uttering aloud the result of his calculation.

"Fifteen months, come Monday," nodded Clara Rall. "Fifteen—" Her body stiffened and she sat there in an attitude of breathless, agonized listening. "Something's happened!" she screamed. "Oh, I just *know* something's happened."

"Come, ma; that ain't no way. You're upstot account of Phillip."

John Rall, himself strangely upset, began to pace about the room. He spied the headphones lying on the floor. Without thinking, as one who is nervous and must be doing something, he picked them up and heard:

"The Moonbeam Four will now play an eccentric fox-trot entitled, 'My Lovey's Gone Away.'"

"DO you Phillip, take Lucille to be your wedded wife, to have and to hold, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health . . ."

Lieutenant Hendry listened critically, and then stepped across his office to move the "volume" dial a hair's width to the left. At the point where a man's voice almost defiantly said, "I do," he turned to Sergeant Wolff and made a grimace.

"Another poor sucker left gasping on the bank. 'I do,' he says! Takes her for better or for worse—damn little better and plenty of the worse."

"You said it, George," agreed the sergeant, and went on copying in the accident book.

Lieutenant Hendry regarded the loud speaker with supercilious amusement. The voice of the clergyman was issuing from it in regular pulpit style, proclaiming to the two thousand grinning spectators and the countless thousands of unseen listeners that Phillip and Lucille were now man and wife, respectively.

"Three cheers for the gloom!" mocked Lieutenant Hendry, a skeptic not without reason for being. Then, as the band opened up, he began to hobble about the room, his back crooked, one feeble hand holding his hip, which was the pessimistic Hendrian conception of hapless husbands on parade. According to Captain Shanahan, who had known his lieutenant since both were kids in Sangamon Street, there had been many a moving skillet in George Hendry's domestic ensemble.

*Here comes the bride,
Da-da-dee-dum!*

From the cellroom down in the basement rose the drunken cry of a prisoner who had heard and recognized the music. Lieutenant Hendry winked comprehendingly. Then, thinking of something, he halted his burlesque to remark:

"Jim Conroy's got the right idea. Soon as they begin to treat him like a husband he gives 'em the gate; and they know it. What's the result? Why, Jim's a free white man with a promising career and no rolling-pin hickies blooming on his head."

"Biggest bootlegger on the North Side," murmured the sergeant in tones of respect.

"Of course he is. But where would he be if he was married? Wife would say, 'Now, James, you quit this business before somebody plugs you,' and she'd keep nagging at him until he'd *have* to quit. That's because she'd got a legal hold on him. But show me the dame who'd be fool enough to try to run Jim, knowing damn well that all he's got to say is, 'I'm through with you,' and she's out. Women got plenty of sense, in a way; they know how far they can go, and how far they can't."

"That's right, George," nodded the sergeant, adding as a fact which could well bear repetition, "and now Jim's the biggest bootlegger on the North Side."

"Sure he is. He'll be naming captains next."

"Well, that oughtn't to bother you any, George."

"Guess not! I been pretty square with Jim." The lieutenant eased his gun belt more comfortably. "Was you on the desk that night, Harry, when one of his women came in and wanted me to make Jim marry her?"

"Sure I was on. . . . I felt a little sorry for the kid."

"Well, I did myself, as far as that goes. Fact is, Harry, I mentioned it to Jim next time I saw him. 'You oughtn't to pick up a kid like that, Jim,' I told him. 'She's fresh off the farm. Why don't you stick to dames who know their stuff?' And Jim agreed I was right. 'I'll tell you, George,' he said, 'I just couldn't help it. It was too easy; the kid was so gone on me, George,' he said, 'that I just brought her right along back to Chi with me.'"

"She wanted to get married in Dectaur—wasn't it?—and Jim says, 'No, there's a swell pastor in Chicago I want to throw some business to.'"

"Something like that," agreed the lieutenant. "She was bawling so damn much I had a hard time following. Matter of fact, Harry, I was too busy thinking how I could get her out of the station before that smart-aleck *Record* reporter come in. He might've messed it up plenty for Jim and all of us."

"Yeh, it's a good idea to stand in with Jim Conroy. He's the biggest bootlegger on the North Side."

From his cubby-hole in the corner the operator was busy taking hour reports of the coppers walking beat. His voice droned on: "Olson—yeh. . . . Aw right, Sollwork. . . . *Who?* Corcoran? Aw right, Corcoran. . . . Moise? *Say*, Moise, take a look at 935½ Stoddard. Lady says there's somebody upstairs pie-eyed and raising the roof. Tell 'im to pipe down. Yeh. . . . Aw right, Savelli. . . ." Back in the squad room Tim Gavin was trying to teach the captain's terrier a trick.

A dance tune jumped staccato from the horn, and Lieutenant Hendry, his hand hesitating on the dial, blinked somberly as he considered it. The melody took a turn for the better and he decided against tuning it out. Leaning back in his chair, he sat at ease.

The telephone rang. Sergeant Wolff bellowed into it, as is the fashion of police sergeants. A police sergeant places small faith in the power of telephones. His duty, as he conceives it, is to yell so loud that his voice will carry most of the distance alone, without benefit of telephony. Sergeant Wolff kept roaring, "What's 'at?" while his face got redder and redder.

"Right away!" he finally shouted and dropped the receiver. "Shooting over on Walton Place, George. Address is—"

Lieutenant Hendry grabbed his coat from a hook. He shouted to the men in the squad room. He patted his holster and spoke a word to Wolff. As he hurried from his office the radio's voice was saying above the ring of the telephone:

"The Moonbeam Four will now play an eccentric fox-trot entitled, 'My Lovey's Gone Away.'"

"DO you, Phillip, take Lucille to be your wedded wife, to have and to hold, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health . . ."

An elaborately-carved radio cabinet projected the question into the far corners of the apartment. It was an expensive apartment, though ugly. The oriental rugs were of a voluptuous gaudiness; the grand piano was chastely white; a Queen Anne sofa stood neighbor to a Louis XV table; ash receivers of varying styles and ingenuity, ranging from the Chinese dragon, which opened its mouth, to the nude figure who gracefully held a basket, were disposed about the place.

As the clergyman's voice ceased, a woman abruptly rose from the sofa and stood facing the radio cabinet.

Her lips were parted, her eyes peering. Swaying slightly, she heard the bridegroom almost defiantly say, "I do."

Presently the clergyman declared that, by the grace of God and the laws of Illinois, the couple standing before him were man and wife. The woman's irresolution left her. She cursed fluently and with a growing fervor. Then, walking unsteadily to the Louis XV table, she poured a drink of gin.

Now, it is a sure token of degradation, of disillusionment, of ideals destroyed, of hope gone smash, when a woman will drink raw gin untouched with lime or orange. Before, she had been in shadow, but, beside the table, the light fell unsparingly upon her face and revealed the marks of her decay.

A woman . . . or still a girl? It would have been hard to decide. But once pretty—that was certain; whatever her present age, twenty years or thirty, her face had surely been pretty. It was the look about her eyes, the slackened line of the lips, the bruise upon her cheeks, that made the difference. A fresh bruise, still uncared for; the blood was almost dry.

A band began to play the *Lohengrin* wedding march—

*Here comes the bride,
Da-da-dee-dum!*

and she dropped the empty glass with a gesture of resignation. It snuggled in the carpet, unbroken.

It was odd, the feelings that were aroused in her by the blatant strains of that march. She had first heard it at her brother William's wedding, in the Unitarian Church; the organ had rolled it as she toddled up the aisle, strewing roses and daffodils which poor old Mr. Miller had to sweep up afterwards. It had taken its place in her heart as the most romantic of all possible tunes, a tune in which was epitomized all the triumphant joys of life.

It was like a taunt now, a laugh of derision. In it was epitomized all the lost visions of life, the things that might have been, the empty, hopeless future.

*Here comes the bride,
Da-da-dee-dum!*

She saw herself standing where Louise must now be standing, her hand under Phillip's arm, her cheeks crimson, her eyes bright, but not with gin. A bride, by the grace of God and the laws of Illinois—a bride proud and unashamed, proud to be seen in Maplehurst, unashamed to stand before her family and her friends.

The hall door opened and Jim Conroy walked in. There was a woman with him. She called out a scornful gibe as she recognized the music. Jim laughed and ordered Margaret to shut it off.

"I won't!" came the sullen response—and then the march was ended.

The silence had an ominous quality. Margaret marveled, in the vagueness of her condition, at the temerity which had permitted her to say it; but she did not care. She didn't care much about anything right now. Jim Conroy, glowering at her, the astonishment still visible on his face; that woman smiling triumphantly, watching for the whirlwind to strike her; Phil Grundle, who'd been hers for the taking—she didn't care much about anything now.

Jim Conroy, brutally cursing, was advancing toward her. In a sort of daze she dodged his fist and clung desperately to his body. Hold tight enough, it came to her, and he couldn't swing his fists. The other woman was laughing.

"Shut up!" Margaret screamed. She felt suddenly

infuriated. She'd have liked to shoot that laugh off, to puncture it with a bullet. She'd have liked—

Jim Conroy's gun! She knew where he always carried it. As she clung to him she could feel it, in its holster, against his hip. Her right hand was almost touching it. A little twist, and she would grasp its handle. She twisted; her fingers closed over the grip; and then, as he threw her from him, the gun remained in her hand.

"Now!" Margaret cried hysterically, and Jim Conroy seemed to freeze.

At first he tried to argue. If she shot, the cops would come and they'd all of them get in trouble. She'd doubtless be sent to prison. Margaret didn't care.

Well, what was the matter with her, anyway? Didn't she love her Jim? Huh, honey, tired of your Jim? The woman's eyes looked so crazy; Lord knows how much gin she'd been drinking. Now, honey, let's kiss and make up. Jim was a little upset, that's all; he didn't mean to hurt her.

"Kiss and make up!" she scoffed bitterly, and then she saw the other woman. "You're going to give me a marriage license," Margaret cried. "A marriage license—like you promised."

"Sure! I will," he said eagerly. "Aw, honey, I didn't think I meant as much as *that* to you. Come on; let's put up the cannon and go out and get us a preacher."

"You mean that?"

"Of course I do! Honest, dear, I been thinking a lot lately about us getting married and settling down."

"Honest you have, Jim?"

"Sure! I thought you'd guessed it."

Margaret looked at the other woman.

"Well, you're too late, Jim. You had your chance for fifteen months, but now I've changed my mind." She shrieked it: "*I've changed my mind, Jim!*"

Snarling, he sprang at her, and her finger pressed the trigger. Again and again she pressed it, until there was no more response than a little *click*, a quiet little *click* like the cheeping of a robin after the thunderstorm is over. Margaret dropped to the floor and stared stupidly at the smoke clouds.

She heard the vestibule door close downstairs: that would be the woman fleeing. Then she became aware that the radio was playing. Sounded like some dance tune. She sat there raptly listening.

The smoke was eddying around the chandelier, but nearer the floor it had cleared. She could see the nude woman who held the ash basket; her head had been cruelly shattered and there was a sort of rusty wire sticking right out of her neck.

Well, *Jim's* head was still in its place. She felt curiously peaceful looking at him there, lying so very quiet. She thought, "Now I can go back home; they'll all say that I served him right." It occurred to her that there would be a trial; they'd put her on trial for murder. Well, she didn't care what they did. She didn't care *what* happened.

After a time the music stopped. It annoyed Margaret, this sudden silence. The music had sounded nice; she wanted to hear some more. How peaceful it was sitting here alone, with Jim like this and the ash lady's head shot off and the radio playing music!

She wished they'd play some more. Why didn't they—? Ah, *there* was somebody now. He had taken it up with the orchestra; they'd have to give her another tune. The man had just said so himself. He had said:

"The Moonbeam Four will now play an eccentric foxtrot entitled, 'My Lovey's Gone Away.'"

THE POISON

Detective Sullivan thought he had an air-tight murder charge against Francis Small. Clearly, he had poisoned his wealthy aunt in order to get her money, and Sullivan was confident his evidence would convict the ambitious young man . . . And then something happened, something quite unexpected, that completely upset Sullivan's case. . . By a pretty piece of detective work he trapped the real murderer.— and provided Tom Curry with a good story plot.

THE reporter, looking for trouble, caught a passing glimpse of his friend Larry Sullivan, detective and admirer of pretty women. Hurrying after the broad shoulders of Sullivan, jostling through the crowd of workers going home after their day's work, the reporter, who was just starting his daily task, knew something was up. Larry never walked that way unless he was on a case.

Like Alice following the rabbit, the reporter saw Larry duck into a subway kiosk, and disappear from the earth; but this was no wonder to a New Yorker. The reporter, with a dash forward, managed to push through the gate two paces behind the detective. With two bounds and a leap, he was inside the closing door of an express, pressing up against the detective.

"Why the hurry?"

Larry managed to turn his broad, good-natured face toward the reporter.

"Oh, it's you, is it?"

"Yes. What's up?"

Larry shook his head gravely. "Poison case," he said, in a low tone. "Old lady. Can't talk here. Wait!"

At Seventy-second Street, Larry was pushed out onto the platform, the reporter in front of him. The detective hurried up the subway steps into the dusk.

"Special detail," he said in explanation.

They walked west, and on a cross-street Larry found a brownstone front where he rang the bell and was admitted by a uniformed officer.

"Where's the body?" asked the detective.

"On the second floor," said Murphy the cop.

Followed by his shadow, Larry mounted to the second-floor front and entered a room which contained but one occupant—a dead body.

Hats off, the two stood for a moment contemplating the scene; then the detective, with a sigh, switched on more lights and pulled back the sheet. On the bed lay the body of an old woman, clothed in black silk. Even in death she seemed majestic; her face was tilted proudly and the staring eyes were stern.

"Where's the doctor?" called Larry, going to the door.

A man's voice answered. "He was called away, sir; he said there was no hope, that she was dead."

"Who're you?" asked Larry.

"The butler, sir. William Frinn."

Looking over the detective's shoulder, the reporter saw a tall, thin, dark-haired man of about thirty-five, with high cheek bones. From down the hall came the sound of sobs.

"Who's crying?"

"That is the cook, sir, Margaret Brown."

"Anybody else in the house?"

"Anna the housemaid, sir. And Mr. Francis will be

here shortly. He is the madame's nephew. Mr. Francis Small," added the butler, as Larry's lips opened.

"This lady is Mrs. Emma Wilton," said Larry, consulting a note-book. "Doctor said she'd been poisoned. Did he say what it was?"

Frinn shook his head. "No, sir. He said the chemist must make an examination."

Sullivan nodded. "Come inside," he said to Frinn. "I want to ask you some more questions—wait, better go into the next room. Switch off the lights," he said to the reporter.

Frinn answered the detective's questions. Mrs. Wilton was very wealthy. Yes, she was a widow, and had no children of her own. Yes, Mr. Francis Small, her brother's son, lived there. He was a chemist.

"Any idea who did this?" asked Larry.

"No, sir," he answered.

"H'm," said Larry.

After getting the details, the reporter left.

It was some weeks later that he obtained full knowledge of the case. From time to time, as the days ran into weeks, he would question Sullivan about it; but the detective was reticent.

It was Larry who volunteered the story of his own free will, one night after he had come off duty.

YOU kept asking me about that poison case—Mrs. Wilton, the old lady, y' know [said Larry]. Well, it's cleared up at last. I'll spill it to you.

She was a widow, with no children living, and had plenty of jack. She lived there in that house, with her nephew, Francis Small, a medium-sized, brown-haired bird, with round head and glasses—he came in a little while after you left. He was about thirty.

He was very much broken up at the death of his aunt—or he acted that way. I had pumped Frinn the butler for all I was worth. He seemed to be holding something back, and I determined to find out what it was.

The maid and the cook were O. K. The cook was afraid they'd accuse her of poisoning the old lady.

Well, on the third floor this bird Small, who was an expert chemist and very smart in his line, had a laboratory of his own. I saw it that evening. It covered the whole of the top floor, and he had it all fitted out pretty, with all sorts of glass stuff and all kinds of chemicals labeled neatly in bottles and boxes on shelves.

An analysis was made by the department chemist; he found the old lady had been fed arsenic.

So far, no arrests had been made. I had men watching the house, and tailing the butler and Small. In Small's laboratory I found plenty of arsenic.

From the housemaid I learned something else. Small brought his aunt a box of candy from time to time; in her desk I found the remains of some candy she'd had.

After analysis, it proved to contain arsenic, the same form of arsenic as was in the jars in Small's laboratory.

At that, I put him under arrest.

"I didn't do it," he kept saying. "It's terrible!"

The poor sap seemed to think he would be believed. He put up no fight at all, just came along like a lamb.

The motive was easy to find. The nephew came in for all Mrs. Wilton's jack; and he needed more money.

The candy would be enough to give him the juice. But after he had been arrested, I questioned the servants.

From them I drew out bit by bit more damning evidence against Small. The nephew often brought his aunt candy and fruit; he had a hot temper, and spent a great deal upon women. He was a wild guy in that way, and his aunt often worried about him. Also, he had big ideas. He was a great chemist all right, and had spent a lot of the old lady's money on expensive experiments. Just before she was poisoned they had had several violent quarrels, due to the fact that Mrs. Wilton would not give him enough cash to start a big manufacturing business of his own.

The evidence was iron-bound. I didn't have a doubt but what Small had slipped the old lady the arsenic.

But he wouldn't confess. And he had no idea of who might have done it, nor could he give me anyone else who might have a motive in killing the old lady.

Could you ask for a stronger case?

I WAS feeling pretty good on having got it worked out so nice, when the department chemist, who'd done the analyzing in the case, took some of the wind out of my sails.

"There's only one thing makes me think maybe Small didn't do it," says Smith the chemist.

"And there's a dozen makes me think he did," says I. Smith laughed. "It sure looks like it," says he. "But I've been thinking it over. Was he drunk when he planted that arsenic?"

"Why, no," says I. "He wanted to croak her, and he did it that way, thinking we wouldn't get on to him."

"Ha, ha!" says Smith, not really laughing, but razzing me. "D' you think any chemist with a brain in his head would poison anybody with arsenic? Why, man, it's so damn easy to find you can dig up a body ten years gone and find it powdering the bones! It stays in the stomach lining, in hard white bits, and I can trace it with my eyes closed. No one but a damn fool or a drunken man would shoot anybody arsenic."

"Is that the only reason you got for thinking Small didn't do it?" says I.

"Yes. And it's a pretty good one, too, Larry," says Smith. "A man with Small's knowledge of poisons and chemicals could have used rare vegetable poisons that would have kept me working till doomsday, and I'd never have found them then. Even potassium cyanide would have been quicker and better, and by the time I got the body, it would have been gone. Maybe the sawbones would have been wise to it; but it goes to pieces in a few hours."

His words took hold of me. Did I want to have an innocent man get a couple of thousand volts through him?

I kept telling myself it was O. K.; that Small had done it and would confess soon. His lawyer was the only person we let see him.

Next day after my talk with Smith, I went to see the prisoner, who had been indicted. He was haggard, and very unhappy; he looked at me with sore eyes. He didn't seem to hold any grudge against me.

"How about coming across, Small?" says I, trying

to be decent as possible. "The case is clear against you. You'll save a hell of a lot of trouble if you'll talk."

He shook his head. "My lawyer says I'm not to speak to anybody," says he.

"Why'd you use arsenic?" I asked him.

He shook his head again. "I didn't do it," he said.

I left him sitting on his bench with his head in his hands. I wandered out into the waiting-room—and say, there sat one of the niftiest little dames I ever saw.

"Waiting to see a prisoner," says I to myself.

She was sitting there alone, a handkerchief over her eyes. Every once in a while she sobbed.

Beauty in distress always gets my goat. I went over to her, though it was none of my business.

"Excuse me, lady," says I, "but is there anything I can do to help you?"

She turned up her tear-stained face. She was a nifty, believe me! Big blue eyes, light blonde hair, not bobbed, a neat little figure and a pretty soft voice.

"They—they won't let me see him," says she.

"Won't let you see who?" I asks her.

"Francis—Mr. Small."

I jumped a mile. "Oh," says I, "you're his sweetie, are you?"

She didn't get sore, she was too worked up. She just nodded and went on crying.

I sat down beside her.

"I'm interested in Mr. Small's case, too," says I softly. "It's a shame. I don't think he did it."

"Oh, I *know* he didn't," she cried. "He was too good and kind. He loved his aunt. They had little squabbles sometimes, but it didn't amount to anything. I *know* he didn't poison her."

"If he didn't," says I, "who did?"

She shook her head. "I don't know," says she.

THINKS I, I will tail you, little one, and see what happens. You see, Smith's words had got my goat and I wanted more proof that I was right. I got up and went off, after a word or two of sympathy, and waited for her to come out.

She did at last, and I followed her to a joint on the upper West Side where she had an apartment.

The janitor winked at me when I'd identified myself and asked him about her. "That's Miss Marie Simmons," says he.

"And what's the wink mean?" says I.

"She's got a sweetie, a good-looking young man with plenty of money, who pays her rent. He is away now, I guess, because I ain't seen him for some time."

"What's he look like?" I asked.

He told me. It was Small, without doubt.

Well, I couldn't blame him. She was a peach. I hung around there, hoping to get another glimpse of her, and about seven o'clock she came out and had a bite to eat in a restaurant, and then started back.

I was tailing her, thinking what a beauty she was and wondering why I'd been born poor, when I saw a tall bird step out of a doorway near her house and stop her.

At first, I thought he was a masher; then I saw that though she shrank from him a little, she knew him.

I managed to get within ten feet of them, as they turned into her doorway. I was right round the corner; they were standing in the outside hall having words.

"—why won't you?" the guy was saying—and as soon as I heard his voice I jumped, because I knew it. It was that butler, Frinn. He had gone off after we had cleared up the case, and, though we were to use him as a star witness in the trial, he had not been watched.

"Because I don't love you," the girl says.

"You love that dirty murderer, don't you?" Frinn says with a sneer. "He'll be dead soon. What will you do then?"

"I'll kill myself," says she.

Frinn laughed. "Oh, no you won't," says he. "Marie, you were a foolish girl to go with him. You should not have looked above your station; you see what it has brought you to."

The girl refused to talk to him any longer; she flung inside the house and I had just time to duck out of sight as Frinn, scowling and mumbling to himself, jazzed out of the doorway and up the street.

WELL, inside of ten minutes I was in the girl's apartment.

"Listen," says I sternly. "You come clean, little one. Come across. Who are you?"

"Why—" says she, starting to act indignant, but I stopped her.

"You little fool," says I, "d'you want to go to the station with me? D'you want to see your sweetie Small convicted of murder? Come clean, or it'll be hell for you all around, understand?"

"What—what do you want to know?" says she faintly.

"I know you and Small were thick," says I quickly. "But where does this tall buzzard Frinn come in? What'd he mean by your going above your station?"

"Oh, that," says she, her eyes round when she saw I had overheard her talk with Frinn. "I used to be personal maid to Mrs. Wilton. William the butler was in love with me; he asked me to marry him and I nearly did. But then, Francis made love to me, and I jilted William. That's what he meant by my going above my station."

"F'heavens' sakes!" says I, with a yell.

There was the clue. There was the motive, and the man.

But it was a slender thread. Nothing proved, nothing but a shadow over the iron-bound case against Small.

How the hell was I to get Frinn—that is, if he had done it?

It took me an hour to figure it out. Then I told the girl what she was to do.

"Remember, it's the only way to save your sweetie," says I. "Play your part well."

The next evening she dressed herself up pretty, and went to Frinn's address, a boarding-house near Columbus Avenue. She got him easy enough, and brought him back to her apartment.

He was quiet at first; sat there smoking the cigaret she gave him. She took a seat beside him.

Then she gave him a drink or two.

"William," says she, softly, "I want to ask you to forgive me. That's why I brought you here. You were always good to me—too good, and I've been a foolish girl."

He was a little wary of her at first. "This is a sudden change from last night," says he.

Then she pulled what I thought was pretty hot stuff.

"William," says she, clenching her little white fists, "I've found something out about—about Francis—Mr. Small. I—I loved him, and trusted him. And do you know what he has been doing? He had another girl and he has been lying to me all along. He has been making a fool of me. It nearly broke my heart; then I realized that I had never really loved him and it was easy to hate him. He made a fool of me, William. Oh, I'm so ashamed!"

And she started to cry. It was working pretty.

"I—I have no one to help me, no one to take care of me," says she, between sobs. "What will I do?"

"I'll take care of you, darling," he says. "Marry me."

He was crazy for that girl, you could see it in his eyes. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "I will," she says.

For an hour Frinn hugged her and kissed her, and she filled him full of liquor and bull. I was getting cramped up, hiding in the closet behind the couch, with a peek-hole I'd made to look through.

FRINN was getting drunk; he was basking in her smile, and she was soft-soaping him.

"I don't see why *you* didn't kill him, William," says she suddenly. "I would have, if I'd been you. I thought you weren't very brave to let me go the way you did."

Frinn didn't say anything for a moment; then he says, thickly, "I did kill him, Marie. At least, he's as good as dead."

"What do you mean?" says she.

Frinn hesitated. The girl prodded him with a word or two. "I hate him," says she. "Tell me, William. I love you. I wish you had killed him."

"I poisoned the old lady," says Frinn, suddenly, hissing the words so that I could scarcely hear. "I did it to get you back, honey. I planted the arsenic in that candy Small brought; I took it out of his laboratory. I did it for you, darling. He'll be convicted of murder and then we'll both have our revenge."

Hot dog! I stepped out from the closet then, and stood before him. He nearly passed out; he went yellow and green, and then a sickly white.

"What—" he gasps.

"You're under arrest," says I, "for the murder of Mrs. Wilton."

"God!" he gasped. Then he let out a scream. "You hell-cat!" he howled, making a pass at the dame, who had listened with gleaming eyes as she saw her sweetie Small saved from death.

She screamed; she was between me and the guy and I couldn't get him. He lunged at her with a knife, but I kicked it out of his hand and covered him.

"Stop!" says I, "or I'll shoot you full of lead."

"Damn you!" he yelled, and he came at me like a wild man. I fired, trying to wing him; got him in the arm, but he didn't stop, and we crashed over the couch and fell in a heap on the rug.

Well, there was quite a wrestling match for a time; he was wild, and goofy at that.

Even while I was battling, I was happy. Because I knew I had him for sure. If he had denied his confession it would have been hard to prove; he could have said he was filling the girl full of hop to make an impression.

At last, after he'd batted me around some, I got a strangle-hold on him, and put all my juice into it. He kicked and gasped; the girl had run screaming for help, but by the time the cop came I had Frinn subdued.

Larry stopped. The reporter had taken down the story. "You'll let me use it?" he said.

"Sure," said the big detective. "Help yourself. We've got Frinn cold. He came across and confessed again, when he saw there was no use. He'll get it. Small was released."

"And the girl?" asked the reporter.

"Oh, she's all right," said Larry. "I think Small's going to marry her. She surely saved his neck."

Another story by Tom Curry will be published complete in the next issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES

By SEABURY QUINN

£7

"I ran in to him," she went on, drying her eyes, "and called, 'Jonas!' and he seemed to grow worse at the sound of my voice. Just as I turned to run from the room I heard Doctor Delaval coming up the front walk, and rushed out to him. He came right in and did what he could for Jonas; but it was too late. My poor darling died while we were trying to get Doctor Hondell on the 'phone."

"U'm?" Forrester wrinkled his brow. "Who is Doctor Delaval? I've heard Jonas speak of him, but I don't think I've ever met him."

"He's an Orientalist," she responded, "very much interested in Yoga. He and Jonas were working on some sort of codification of the system. I didn't understand it very well, but they were together a great deal, and Jonas was giving more and more time to it. Indeed, it seemed to me, sometimes, he neglected his university work for Doctor Delaval's."

"U'm?" Forrester repeated. "Did I understand you to say he tried to help Jonas?"

"Yes—oh, yes! He's a physician as well as a scholar, you know, and happened to have a case of medicines with him today. He gave Jonas an injection of strychnine, and it seemed to revive him for a moment, but—the dear boy was too far gone for anything to help, and—" again the hot tears drowned her words, and Forrester gave her shoulder another reassuring pat as he turned from the room and sought his ward.

"All right, Uncle Harvey," the girl whispered as he beckoned her. She threw her arms about Emma Podkin and gave her a parting kiss of sympathy as she followed the Professor out into the chilly April twilight.

THEY strode along the tree-bordered street in silence, busy with their thoughts. Finally the girl whispered: "Uncle Harvey, will you promise not to laugh?"

"Eh?" Forrester came out of his brown study and blinked owlishly at her through his glasses. "Laugh, child? I don't feel like laughing. I—"

"I mean," she interrupted, "please don't laugh at what I want to say. I—I don't like it."

The Professor regarded her narrowly. She was a remarkable young woman, this eighteen-year-old ward of his. The offspring of an American soldier and a Filipino mother, she had been sold into slavery by a villainous uncle shortly after her parents' death, and had served years of apprenticeship in a den of Singapore criminals before Forrester found and adopted her. Intensely American, loving her father's people with a love that was almost idolatry, she had not yet learned to speak English well enough to control her vocabulary in times of stress, and the Professor wondered if her odd statement were the result of inability to express herself as he answered questioningly, "You don't like what, child?"

"The way Professor Podkin died. I had luncheon with him and Mrs. Podkin and Emma, you know, and he seemed well enough while we were at table, and—"

"Of course," Forrester interrupted soothingly. "He had acute indigestion, my dear. It comes on as suddenly as heart disease, and doesn't often give its victim much warning."

"Yes, I know, but—there was something odd about the way Doctor Delaval attended him, sir. Professor Podkin had taken off his house coat and covered himself with a rug before he lay down on the study couch to sleep, and the window was open a few inches from the bottom—the couch was directly under the window, too, for he said he liked the fresh air to blow over him as he slept. When Mrs. Podkin came screaming from

the study, Emma and I ran in, and Doctor Delaval came in with Mrs. Podkin a moment later. He had a little medicine case with him, and, though I have seen him at the Podkin house many times, that is the first time I ever saw him carry such a case. It seemed to me he already had a syringe filled with something, for he hardly seemed to hesitate a moment before he rolled the Professor's sleeve up and shot something into his arm. And—" she paused a moment, as though to marshal her words or bring her memory into line before continuing—"he injected whatever it was into Professor Podkin's left arm."

"Well?" Forrester asked, faintly amused at her earnestness.

"That was the arm nearest the window and farthest from him. It would have been easier for him to shoot his injection into Professor Podkin's right arm; but he didn't. He pulled the couch out from the wall a little, closed the window, and slipped in between the couch and the wall before he rolled the Professor's sleeve up and applied the medicine."

"U'm!" Forrester mulled over her information while they walked a hundred feet or so. "That is queer, Rosalie. Mighty queer. People do some odd things when they're excited, I know; but you'd think, if the man is a physician, constant practice would have taught him to choose the nearer arm. I—wonder—if—"

"What?" she prompted, leaning nearer and slipping her gloved fingers through the crook of his elbow.

"Oh, nothing. I was just wondering if he chose the left arm in order to make the strychnine injection work faster. However, I'll call Hondell on the 'phone as soon as we get home."

"I'm sorry to have to upset your theory, my dear," he told the girl an hour later as he finished a brief colloquy with Doctor Hondell, "but everything seems quite all right. Hondell verified the fact that Delaval injected strychnine, and nothing else, into Podkin's arm, and tells me it was one of the best things he could have done for him, but the poor chap was so far gone that even strychnine couldn't keep his overworked engine going."

"Oh!" Rosalie responded. But the stubborn line of her flowerlike mouth as she bent her blonde, bobbed head over her embroidery frame showed she had not abandoned her suspicions, no matter how damaging the family physician's opinion might be to them.

II

"HELLO, Professor!" the young man greeted cheerfully as Forrester answered the vigorous ringing of the front doorbell three nights later. "Do you know me?"

"Perfectly," the Professor replied after a quick, shrewd scrutiny of the other's features. "You're Carter, '25; and a very good student you were, too, even if you did always insist that the Proto-Egyptians—"

"Oh, have a heart, sir!" the other besought with a laugh. "Can't we let the dead past bury its dead in the dust of Egypt? May I come in?"

"Surely," Forrester held the door open courteously for his guest, then led the way to the drawing-room. "Rosalie, this is Mr. Carter, one of my former students; Mr. Carter, this is my ward, Miss Osterhaut."

Customary amenities exchanged, Professor Forrester proffered a cigar to his caller and stuffed his own pipe to overflowing with a generous handful of black, long cut tobacco. "What are you doing these days, Carter?" he began, by way of opening conversation.

"That's just it," the other returned, puffing appreciatively at an excellent perfecto. "That's just what's the matter, sir. I'm working for the National Life Insurance Company, and doing mighty well at it."

"Fine!" Forrester congratulated. "But if you're trying to sell me a policy—"

"Not a chance!" Carter scoffed. "I know you too well. Besides, I'm not in the selling end. I'm a claim investigator. I'd like to get some information from you, if you don't mind."

"I'm afraid I'll not be much good as an actuary—" the Professor began, but the insurance man waved his protest aside.

twenty-five thousand dollars. Mrs. Robertson died of acute indigestion two months ago, and Delaval happened to be calling on her when the seizure occurred, and tried to render first aid. Didn't make a very good job of it, though. He gave her a shot of strychnine in the arm, but she was gone before her hysterical maid could find a doctor.

"Oh, sure—" he glanced from the Professor to Rosalie and back again—"everything was right as rain. Medical certificate and everything. Doctors said the treatment he gave both Mrs. Robertson and Professor Podkin was the best possible in the circumstances—but just the same my company isn't going to pay out fifty thousand

"**D**ON'T move!" Rosalie's warning was almost a scream as she launched herself across the room. Next instant she landed heavily on the rose-colored rug. . . .

"*Ah!* Have you killed it? Be careful!"

"Under the girl's crushing heels protruded a cable-like cylinder some nine or ten inches in length, one end twitching viciously, the other lying quiescent.

"No need to tell a man traveled through the wild places of the world what it was that writhed beneath Rosalie's feet. Forrester recognized the thing instantly—"

"I'd like to get some data on Professor Podkin's death. You were at the house a few minutes after it occurred, I understand."

Forrester stiffened slightly in his chair. "Do I understand you intend contesting Professor Podkin's policy?" he asked.

"We-el," the young man hesitated a moment, "I'm not sure we'd be exactly justified in contesting it, but there's something queer about it, just the same. Do you happen to know a man by the name of Delaval?"

Rosalie, who had been playing idly with a string of amber beads—an oriental habit of which she had never been able to break herself—let the polished globules slip through her tapering fingers and leaned toward the speaker. "You want to know about Doctor Delaval?" she asked, her slightly quickened breath seeming to drive the words through her lips with more than usual force.

"Be still, Rosalie!" Forrester cut in irritably. Then to Carter:

"What about him?"

"Well, sir, he had a policy on Professor Podkin's life for fifty thousand dollars. Claimed he and the Prof. were engaged in some sort of scientific research together and that he stood to lose the labor of a lifetime if Professor Podkin died before they finished it."

"Yes? Well?"

"Well, that might be all right, too. I don't suppose you can get any hard and fast monetary valuation on a man's personal contribution to science, and if he was actually working with Podkin, as he claims, I reckon he'd have an insurable interest in his life. But he had a policy on Mrs. Wilma Robertson, too. Claimed she and he were studying together to bring some great truth or other to the world, and her value as a co-worker was

iron men on top of twenty-five in two cases so much alike until somebody's told us how come and why. Can you blame us?"

"Excuse me a moment, please?" Rosalie rose quickly from her chair and hurried from the room.

PROFESSOR FORRESTER sucked thoughtfully at his pipe, staring at the crackling logs in the drawing-room fireplace. Carter cast an admiring glance after Rosalie, then turned his gaze fireward and joined the Professor in pensive silence.

"Do you mind if I tell Mr. Carter what I told you the other day, Uncle Harvey?" Rosalie asked as she returned from upstairs, a small parcel of white linen in her hand.

"Not at all; go ahead," Forrester nodded acquiescence, and returned to his thoughtful study of the shifting flames.

Speaking slowly, choosing her words with the care experience had taught her was necessary when employing her unfamiliar mother tongue while excited, the girl repeated the occurrences at Professor Podkin's house the day he died.

"And here," she announced as she concluded her narrative, "is something else I wanted to show you, Uncle Harvey." From the chair beside her she lifted the bundle of linen and flung it open. It was a man's white shirt, much crumpled with use, but otherwise quite fresh. "See—" she indicated the left sleeve with a forefinger which shook with excitement. On the outer side of the thin white fabric, at a point where the sleeve would rest midway between its wearer's elbow and shoulder, there was a single tiny red stain, as though the skin beneath the linen had been pricked with a fine pin or needle.

"The hypo—" Forrester began, then checked himself, for his memory recalled her story even as she put her correction into words:

"But Doctor Delaval rolled Professor Podkin's sleeve up *before he injected the strychnine, and didn't roll it down again.* That shirt sleeve was turned up, just that way, until the undertaker's men came for the body. I made sure of that by asking Emma before I begged the shirt from her. I *told you I didn't like the way Professor Podkin died, Uncle Harvey!*"

"Sister—" Tom Carter looked frank admiration at Rosalie—"you're a queen! If everybody could use their eyes and their beans like you do—" he broke off and made a vague, but vastly complimentary, gesture with both hands. "I'll give this Doctor Delaval a ring tomorrow and have him down at my office. He'll have some tall explaining to do before he gets my company to hand him a check for any fifty thousand smackers."

Forrester knocked the ashes from his pipe. "Let us know when this Delaval person makes his appointment for the interview, will you, please, Carter?"

"Sure," the other agreed enthusiastically. "Will you sit in the game with me, sir?"

Forrester's narrow, aristocratic nostrils were twitching with excitement, but he managed an excellent imitation of his frosty classroom smile as he replied: "I shall not be idle, young man, depend on that."

III

"NO, sir, Doctor Delaval isn't in, right now," the neat colored maid informed the Professor and Rosalie as they stood before the door of Delaval's Sixteenth Street apartment the following afternoon. "I don't know just when to expect him back, either."

Forrester beamed kindly on her through his glasses. "I think we'll wait for him—a little while, at any rate. He was expecting us." Surreptitiously, as he spoke, he inserted the toe of his narrow shoe between the door and the jamb. By the time he had concluded his announcement he was half-way through the portal, Rosalie, ever quick to act on suggestion, close at his heels.

"I don't think—" the maid began dubiously, but the Professor gave her no time to voice objection.

"We'll wait in the living-room a little while," he told her, passing his hat, gloves and stick to her with the air of one thoroughly assured of his welcome. "Come, Rosalie," he led the way through the arched door to the room beyond, "the doctor is apt to be home any moment, you know."

His air of perfect assurance carried the day. The servant closed the door, deposited his outdoor things on a chair and went quietly to her quarters at the rear of the house.

Forrester continued his rôle of expected and familiar guest. Producing his short-stemmed briar pipe, he loaded it with a generous charge of rank tobacco, set it alight, then stared about the room with a quick, stock-taking glance.

It was a gorgeous place. Every item of furnishing proclaimed it the abode of a man of wealth, taste and refinement. The walls were hung with a light gray paper in which an indistinct, almost invisible pattern in a slightly lighter shade traced the design of piling cirrus clouds against an autumn sky. The floor was covered with a marvelous Chinese rug with coral background and figures of old blue, and low chairs, heavily upholstered in long-napped mohair and finest needlepoint, invited the visitor to rest. Under the arch of a Parian marble mantel a log fire snapped and crackled behind a three-barred brass fender, while a tiny ormolu clock

with porcelain face and gilded hands beat off the minutes with sharp, musical clicks. Pictures in profusion lined the walls—a landscape by an apt pupil of Corot, one or two Botticellis, a dark Flemish interior by Frans Hals, and a single, life-sized portrait of the face and shoulders of a mediaeval gentleman above the mantel.

The likeness was done after the manner of Tiziano of Cadore, no detail left to the beholder's imagination, every item portrayed with photographic fidelity. The subject was a man in early middle life, light-haired, blue-eyed with full, red lips and a look of gentle melancholy softening his pale, austere features. As far as could be seen, he was dressed in a doublet of white satin thickly sewn with seed pearls, and about his neck hung several golden collars, emblems of knightly orders. But his beard was his outstanding characteristic. In sharp contrast to his hair and mustache, which were almost blond, it was jet black, yet, by some trick of the artist's colors, perhaps, it showed a bluish tinge in certain lights, and, looking from the blue-black beard to the pensive blue eyes above, there appeared a hint, the merest suggestion, of wolfishness.

Rosalie stood beside Professor Forrester and viewed the portrait long and earnestly. "I do not like it," she pronounced. "He is cruel, an animal, a beast—and he much resembles Doctor Delaval."

Forrester nodded, then turned his eyes from the picture and strolled across the room to examine a small black leather hand-case, such as physicians use to carry their medicines.

Picking up the satchel, he pulled tentatively at its lock, failed to force it, and rested the case against the marble top of the table. As he did so, the smooth leather slipped along the polished marble slab, colliding with a vase of drooping flowers and thrusting it backward toward the window. There was a scraping sound, the tinkle of thin glass striking wood, then the crash of shattered crystal, and a specimen case, which had stood at the extreme edge of the table, concealed by the jar of flowers, crashed to the polished floor beyond the edge of the rug.

"DRAT it!" Forrester exclaimed. "Now I *have* done it!" He leaned over the medicine bag, intent on forcing it open without further delay, shook his head in vexation, and straightened abruptly, his eyes narrowed with sudden strain. The motion of his head had dislodged his pince-nez, leaving him almost blinded.

"Confound it!" he ejaculated, bending toward the floor with outstretched, groping fingers. "I'm getting as butter-fingered as—"

"Uncle Harvey, stop! Don't move!" Rosalie's warning was almost a scream as she launched herself across the room, cannoning into the Professor and hurling him backward a foot or more. Next instant she rose in the air like a bouncing ball, brought her slim ankles together with a *click* and landed heavily on the rose-colored rug, the sharp French heels of her little black kid pumps grinding down on a spot which could have been covered by a silver dollar.

"What on earth—" Forrester demanded half angrily, as he reached into his waistcoat pocket, found a pair of emergency glasses and thrust them on his nose with an irritated, chopping gesture. "Have you gone completely crazy—*ah!* Have you killed it? Be careful!"

Under the girl's crushing heels protruded a cablelike cylinder some nine or ten inches in length, one end twitching viciously, like the released end of a coiled steel spring, the other lying quiescent against the rug. Its color was a rich, deep red, almost exactly simulating the groundwork of the carpet, narrow bands of black

and yellow cutting through the red at irregular intervals. No need to tell a man traveled through the wild places of the world what it was that writhed beneath Rosalie's feet. Forrester recognized the thing instantly—now that his glasses had restored his usual keenness of vision. It was a coral snake, the smallest and deadliest of all venomous reptiles, and its blunt-nosed head lay within an inch of where the Professor's fallen glasses shone dimly.

"Careful!" he repeated, placing his foot alongside Rosalie's and bearing firmly down on the broken-backed, but still faintly wriggling, serpent. "Careful, my dear, there's a lot of vitality in these little devils, and a single touch of their fangs is death. Ah, so! I think it's safe for you to step back now."

He gave an added pressure to his foot, made sure the reptile was completely harmless, then withdrew his foot, staring downward wonderingly. "What the dickens was that thing doing here?" he demanded.

"It was in a glass case behind those flowers," the girl supplied. "Right where the sun would shine on it. When you pushed the flower-vase back you jogged the case the snake was in off the table. I wouldn't have noticed it against the red rug, but its head happened to be over one of the blue figures just as you reached down, and I saw it rise to strike you. *Wah!*" she lapsed into oriental speech as was her wont when excited. "Many serpents have I seen in Singapore and India, my lord, but never one which strikes without coiling. This worm is brother to the devil, master!"

"I think you're right," the Professor agreed as he unfolded his handkerchief, carefully wrapped the dead reptile in it and thrust the grisly parcel into his jacket pocket. "Come, let's get out of this before Delaval comes back and finds us. I don't think he'd relish our killing his pets."

During their short walk down Sixteenth Street, while looking for a cruising taxi, and while they bowled home over the smooth asphalt roads to the college suburb, Professor Forrester wrinkled his brow and wagged his head perplexedly. "Delaval—Delaval?" he repeated over and over to himself musingly. "Delaval—where—when—"

DINNER was finished, Amaryllis Washington, the colored maid-of-all-work, had served coffee before the drawing-room fire, and Forrester was solacing himself with his pipe while Rosalie puffed contentedly at her cigarette, curled up in her chair before the burning logs like a pussy-cat upon her cushion, when the Professor suddenly broke the peaceful postprandial calm.

"I have it!" he announced, rising and striding excitedly across the hearth till he looked directly into his ward's startled, upturned eyes. "I have it, my dear. I've been chewing on it all afternoon, but, by Jupiter Pluvius, I've got it now!"

"What?" asked the girl wonderingly.

"Delaval!" he replied, as though annoyed at her obtuseness. "Delaval, of course; what else? It's pronounced 'Della-val,' but look at the spelling! It's de Laval, and that was the family name of Giles de Retz, who was hanged and burned at Nantes in 1440 for wholesale murder!"

"O-oh!" Rosalie started up, but Forrester was bursting with his discovery.

"And that picture—the one you said you didn't like—that we saw at his apartment today: I *knew* I'd seen that face somewhere before. It's a copy of the only portrait extant of Giles de Laval, the greatest murderer of Mediæval Europe and the original of the fairy tale of Bluebeard we use to frighten children with today!"

He hurried to the study, ruffled through the telephone directory, finally barked, "Give me Potomac 49325, please."

"Hello, Carter? Forrester speaking," he announced, when his connection was made. "About the Podkin insurance policy payable to Doctor Delaval; withhold payment—absolutely refuse any compromise settlement, even—till you've heard from me."

"Take it in low, Professor," Carter replied with a chuckle. "Don't you go advising ducks to swim or cats to eat liver. I wouldn't pay that bimbo a counterfeit Turkish piaster till I know why he was Johnny-on-the-spot when two perfectly good risks kicked the bucket."

"I'll tell you, if you can wait till tomorrow afternoon!" Forrester promised. "I've got some researches to make, but I think I've caught the scent of the most villainous plot I've ever encountered."

IV

PROFESSOR FORRESTER had no classes the following morning, but he found plenty to occupy his time. When Cassidy, the janitor of the Science Building, arrived to begin his daily round of duties he found Forrester hard at work with scalpel, tweezers, microscope and a bewildering array of apparatus in the biological laboratory, and a little later Wilson, the assistant librarian, was kept busy supplying a number of obscure works on zoölogy and toxicology in response to the Professor's urgent calls.

At half-past one, fifteen minutes later than his usual time, the Professor came home to luncheon, and did full justice to the broiled Irish bacon, Sally Lunn and tea which Amaryllis placed before him.

"Rosalie, my dear," he remarked, as he filled his pipe for his after-luncheon smoke, "I think we're going to have a very pleasant time. Yes—an eminently enjoyable occasion."

"*Hou!*" the girl laughed softly, lapsing into her quaint patois of mixed oriental and occidental speech. "Is my master about to confound the wicked one?"

"Quite so," he assured her, puffing with lazy enjoyment at the use-blackened briar. "Quite so, my dear; the wicked one is about to be most confoundedly confounded, I think."

"Mistu Cyarter wants ter speak ter yuh, suh," Amaryllis informed him. "He says hit's mos' impo'tant. Yessuh."

"Hold everything, Professor," Tom Carter's cheerful voice announced as Forrester picked up the 'phone. "Delaval wants a conference with me at his house at three this afternoon, and I'd like to have a big armful of alibis to hand him when he asks for a showdown."

"Very well," Forrester returned. "Meet me at the corner of Sixteenth and Q Streets at ten minutes of three."

"I'll be there, sir, if they have to carry me there on a stretcher!"

"Er, Carter," the Professor suggested tentatively, "perhaps you'd better have a policeman within call; we might—"

"Fear not; I've got a commission as a special officer—for convenience in my investigation work, you know. Yes, *sir*, regular po-lice-man, that's me; wear a trick badge on my galluses and pack a gun, n' everything. I'll add a pair of handcuffs to the ordnance equipment, if you say."

"This thing may be more serious than you realize," Forrester warned. "I think you'll do well to have your pistol with you."

V

"GOOD evening," Carter greeted his host as the colored maid showed him, the Professor and Rosalie into Delaval's sumptuous living-room. "This is Professor Forrester of the School of Anthropology at Benjamin Franklin University, an old friend of Professor Podkin's and mine; and this is Miss Osterhaut. I brought 'em along this afternoon to give me moral support and all that, you know."

Doctor Delaval nodded frigidly to the Professor in acknowledgment of the introduction, but did not trouble to rise from his chair. Rosalie he ignored completely. "I fail to see why you require moral support from strangers in a plain business transaction," he replied coldly. "Your company owes me money and has refused to pay it up to date. I now demand that you fulfill your obligations." As he spoke he pulled out a drawer of the small desk at which he sat and produced a packet of papers.

Forrester and Rosalie glanced uncomfortably about the room, for their host made no offer of seats. Finally the Professor sank into the nearest chair, and Rosalie glided across the room with the lithe grace acquired in years of intensive study of oriental dancing, and seated herself near the window, being careful to draw both feet up from the floor and tuck them securely under her.

The Professor glanced at the picture above the fireplace, then at the man beside the desk. The resemblance between the painted features and the cold, pale countenance of his host was remarkable. Like the picture, Delaval possessed a wealth of light-brown hair and a curling mustache of the same shade, and his strong, rather prominent chin was adorned with a close-cropped Van Dyke beard of intense black, a feature to single him out in any crowd, no matter how large. His eyes were blue and cold as the agate eyes of an image, and the lips which showed between his light mustache and dark beard were well-formed and vivid red, but thin, and habitually set in a sort of sneering smile as though he regarded his fellows in general with a kind of pitying contempt. Trained to note physical characteristics in Bushmen or Esquimaux, Thibetans or fellaheen, when neither camera nor notebook were available for memorandum, and memory must be relied on, Forrester was studying his subject with the intentness of a professional anthropologist when his scrutiny was broken by the sound of the other's voice.

"I have here the copy of Professor Podkin's death certificate," he was saying, "and it indicates he died of acute indigestion. Here—" he held out a second paper—"is the receipt for the last premium on the policy of insurance on his life held by me, and here—" he placed a third document on the desk beside the others—"is the policy itself. My case is complete. The contingency upon which you agreed to pay me \$50,000 has occurred, namely, Professor Podkin's death, and I demand my money, sir. There is nothing more to be said in the matter. That is all."

Forrester crossed his thin knees and laid his long, slender fingers together, tip to tip, gazing studiously at the fire behind the bright brass fender. "Not quite all," he objected mildly. "There are one or two little matters to be gone into, I think."

"Ah? Indeed?" Delaval returned sneeringly, his thin lips curling back from his gleaming teeth in open contempt of this bookish little man who dared question his statement. "Perhaps you can shed some light on the mystery which seems to be puzzling our young friend here?" He cast a disdainful glance at Carter.

"Perhaps," Forrester agreed, his gaze still upon the

fire. "Carter," he turned his head slightly toward the younger man, without raising his eyes, and his voice assumed the thin, metallic tone he used only in lecture hall, "do you happen to know what wourali is?"

"No, sir," the other returned wonderingly. Delaval leaned a little farther forward, and his sardonic smile lost some of its bitter mirth, becoming more of a grimace.

"I thought you did not," Forrester replied almost wearily. "Contrary to general misconception, the Amazonian Indians do not poison their arrows with snake venom or animal toxins; they employ a black resinoid extract from the bark of *Strychnos toxifera*, an indigenous shrub, and anoint their arrowheads with it. They call it wourali, but chemists know it as curare. When taken internally the concoction has little or no effect, but when injected intravenously, as on the tip of an arrow, for instance, it paralyzes the motor nerves and produces death by paralysis of respiration. Its active principle is curarine, the formula of which is $C_{19}H_{26}ON_2$.

"Now pay particular attention to this: Strychnine, our commercial drug, is obtained from the plant *Strychnos ignatia*, which is closely allied to that from which wourali is made. As you are doubtless aware, strychnine, when taken internally, acts as a powerful neurotic stimulant, and produces death by paralysis of the respiratory system, if the dose be large enough. Curiously enough, its formula is strikingly similar to that of curarine, being $C_{21}H_{22}O_2N_2$. Not identical formulae, of course, but similar; very similar. As you probably do not know, an injection of a quarter-grain of strychnine into the arm, for instance, will result in convulsions and death within a comparatively short time, twenty minutes or so, a somewhat quicker death than the same amount taken internally would produce."

THE atmosphere of the room was tense, electric, like the dead-calm before a cyclone, or the dreadful instant in the death chamber before the executioner sets free the current that hurls the condemned into eternity. Carter sat forward in his chair, grasping its arms till his knuckles showed white against the skin, Rosalie's topaz eyes were dilated as though she saw some indescribably horrible thing taking shape before her, and once or twice she moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue; her soft breathing could be heard across the chamber as she leaned forward to catch every word. Delaval's black beard seemed to bristle on his chin and give off blue lights like a living thing, his lips were so contracted that they showed pale and bloodless against his teeth, and his face had gone almost corpse-gray. Only Professor Forrester, still studying the fire, his finger tip to tip, seemed unaware of the dramatic tension.

"We need not go into an extended discussion of the reptilia," he droned on in his sing-song classroom voice, "but it will be interesting to note that the bites of certain snakes cause symptoms almost exactly like those of poisoning by curare. The Indian cobra, for instance, causes death in a short time by paralyzing the respiratory centers of the nervous system, and so does the bite of the king cobra. These snakes belong to the family of elapidae, which includes the death adder and tiger snake of Australia and the coral snakes of both North and South America.

"The South American coral snake—*elaps fulvius*, you know—carries the deadliest poison of all his tribe, even the cobras being comparatively harmless beside him, though he is the smallest member of his family. Fortunately, however, he is provided with such short fangs that ordinary clothing will usually prevent his piercing

the skin and injecting his mortal venom into the blood. However, his fangs are sufficiently long to penetrate an ordinary linen shirt, perhaps to cut through several thicknesses of such thin fabric.

"Now, Professor Podkin was found by his wife in a sort of convulsion just before he died, and when she called to him he seemed to become worse. So would a person suffering from strychnine poisoning—or the bite of one of these related snakes whose venom sets up symptoms resembling those of curarine poisoning. If, by any odd chance, Podkin *had* been bitten by, let us say, a South American coral snake, an injection of strychnine would not only not have helped him, it would have hastened his death from the venom. But of course—" he raised his eyes for the first time and blinked benevolently at his hearers through the lenses of his pince-nez—"of course, it's out of the question that such a snake could have bitten Professor Podkin. There should not be any such reptiles in this part of the world, you know.

"Now, as Dr. Delaval has pointed out, he happened to be calling at the Podkins' just as the poor fellow was seized with indigestion, and, having his medicine kit handy, he gave him an injection of strychnine. That was the best thing he could have done—for indigestion. He did the same thing for Mrs. Robertson some time before, too, I am informed.

"But in Professor Podkin's case the doctor was evidently nervous. The shock of seeing his friend and co-worker so ill made him take unnecessary trouble, for, instead of injecting his strychnine in Professor Podkin's *right* arm, which was nearest to him, he walked completely around the couch and injected the *left* arm, which was nearest to the open window by which Podkin had been lying asleep.

"In order to administer the dose he found it necessary to roll back Podkin's sleeve, of course, and on that sleeve was later found a tiny spot of blood. This could not have come from the wound made by the hypodermic needle, because the sleeve was not rolled down again until the undertaker's assistants came for Podkin's body.

"Yesterday afternoon Rosalie and I called on Doctor Delaval, to offer our condolences at the loss of his friend; but unfortunately the doctor was out. I'm a clumsy sort of individual, and in the course of my blundering about, I chanced to knock over a glass specimen-case, and almost died as a consequence, for a half-grown coral snake happened to be in that case, and very nearly bit me. Thanks to Rosalie's prompt action, the beast was killed; and as I was sure Doctor Delaval would have no use for a dead snake about the house, I removed the carcass.

"This morning, in the biological laboratory—just as a matter of curiosity—I dissected the reptile's head, and found that one of his poison fangs had been removed. You see, if he had bitten anyone, he could have made only one wound with his remaining fang, and, while that fang was quite long enough to pierce a shirt-sleeve—such as Professor Podkin's, for example—it was so small in diameter that an ordinarily large hypodermic needle, inserted in the exact spot where the fang had penetrated the skin, would obliterate all traces of snake-bite.

"By the way, Doctor Delaval, *what size needle did you use on Professor Podkin?*"

"**YOU** devil! You uncanny, merciless little devil!" Doctor Delaval had risen from his chair and stood staring in a sort of horrified fascination at Professor Forrester. His derisive smile was gone, and in its place had come such a look of animal ferocity as the

Professor had never seen on human face. He ground his teeth like a wild beast gnashing its fangs before springing on its prey, and his cold blue eyes blazed in his death-pale face with a demoniacal phosphorescence.

"Damn you!" he almost shrieked, "you've guessed it! Yes, I did it. I killed Podkin—the little fat swine!—and I killed the Robertson woman, too. I put my pretty little pet through the open windows beside which they both slept, holding it in a hand encased in a wire-cloth glove, and teased it into biting them. Then I hurried away, and came to their houses within the next fifteen minutes, knowing they would be breathing their last by then, and would not be able to tell anyone what ailed them, for they—poor miserable fools!—didn't know, themselves. I injected the strychnine in their arms, both to hasten the effect of the snake poison and to destroy the traces of the fang's marks, for I knew no idiotic doctor in this city of fools would ever attribute their deaths to anything so improbable as snake-bite.

"I collected for the Robertson death—" he glared defiantly at Carter—"and I should have collected for old fat Podkin's death, too, if it had not been for you, you meddling little busybody!" He turned his infuriated glare on Forrester.

"But don't think you'll ever hail *me* into court for murder, you short-sighted little school teacher!"

With a sweeping movement he yanked out the desk drawer, seized something inside and brandished it above his head. It was a gray metal object, about the size and shape of a large lemon, and both Forrester and Carter breathed faster at sight of it. As Captain Forrester, the Professor had seen too many of those things while serving with the Ordnance Department during the World War to be mistaken, and Carter had dodged more than one on the contested fields of Picardy and Flanders. It was a Lewis bomb, a hand-grenade, not much larger than a child's fist, but capable of crumpling the room to a mass of wreckage if hurled against wall or floor.

"You'll not take me, I tell you!" Delaval screamed again. "See there?" he pointed his free hand at the portrait above the mantel-shelf. "Do you know who that is? Giles de Laval, Lord of Retz and Maréchal of France—*Bluebeard*! He was my ancestor, and I am his reincarnation; but I have bettered his work. He killed for pleasure only, while I have made my victims support me in the state to which one of my noble blood is entitled. Ha! You think that you—you miserable, slow-minded Yankees—can take me, Giles de Laval the Second, to prison? *No!* None of us leaves this room alive!"

The swishing rustle of silk against silk, so soft it was scarcely audible, even in the deathly stillness following Delaval's wild outburst, came from the chair in which Rosalie crouched. Then:

"Uh!" the exclamation was half cry, half grunt, as Delaval stumbled half a step forward, twisted sharply to the left and let the bomb fall from his unnerved fingers. The thing dropped harmlessly to the soft cushion of the thick Chinese rug at his feet, but neither Forrester nor Carter took note of it.

Lithe and graceful as a young tigress springing on her prey—and as savagely—Rosalie hurled herself from her chair with a long, vaulting leap and landed squarely on Delaval's back a split-second after the metal-tipped French heel of her little shoe, flung with the unerring accuracy of one trained to cast throwing-knives with deadly effect, had caught him behind the ear, knocking him half-unconscious.

Below the hem of her modishly short black satin afternoon gown one of the girl's extremities was clad in peach-bloom gossamer silk and a pump of gleaming

patent leather, the other showed lily-pale against the red field of the rug, and, stretched between her slender hands, she held the stocking she had ripped off while cowering in her chair.

With a quick, dextrous movement she looped the silken tube into a flying noose, dropped its coil about Delaval's neck and drew the ends together, crossing them and straining with all her lithe young strength at the knot thus made, while her slender fingers knotted into fists and her knuckles kneaded at his spine at the base of the skull.

The man's neck muscles stood out like cords, and the tendons showed like lines of white against the skin of his hands as he strove futilely to break the pitiless silken thing that choked the breath from his lungs. His mouth opened spasmodically, the tongue protruding between lips which already began to take on a bluish tinge, while the blood seemed bursting from his face and his deep-sunk eyes started forward horribly, as though pushed from behind.

"Wah, spawn of the sewer," the girl hissed in a voice as venomous as the hiss of a serpent, lapsing into Hindustani in her excitement, "wallah, unclean descendant of thrice-filthy ancestors, would you threaten the life of Forrester Sahib? Worm, snake's-brother, consorter-with-the-crawling-things-of-the-earth, darrest thou lift thy obscene hand against my lord? By the Seven Holy Ones, I shall teach thee to kiss the dust before his feet!"

Half strangled, wholly bewildered, all the fight choked and frightened from him, the wretched man toppled to the floor, and, like a terrier worrying a rat, the girl was on top of him, thrusting her bared knee between his shoulder-blades, pulling his head upward, releasing it to bang against the floor, then dragging it upward again with relentless, neck-breaking jerks.

"Rosalie!" Forrester commanded sharply. "Stop it; you're killing him!"

"Of course," she answered pantingly, driving her victim's face downward into the rug's thick nap, then snapping his neck upward with a short, savage tug. "Of course, I shall slay him; did he not imperil my master's life?"

"That will do," the Professor replied, taking her hands in his and forcing her to drop the stocking. "Let him up, he—"

"He's all wet!" Mr. Carter supplied, as he flung his hundred and ninety-two pounds of bone and muscle upon the prostrate Delaval, drew his hands sharply together and snapped steel wristlets on them. "I took your advice, Professor, and came prepared with the harness," he explained, dragging his manacled captive to his feet. "Come on, you," he seized Delaval's collar and lifted him from the chair into which he had flung him as easily as if he had been a child. Come on to the police. You've gypped the National Life Insurance Company for the last time."

VI

PROFESSOR FORRESTER looked almost diffidently at the serene young woman seated in the taxicab beside him. She was still only partially clothed, for she

steadfastly refused to resume the stocking with which she had nearly put Delaval to death. "It is not fitting that a maiden wear that which had encircled the neck of a toad," she informed the Professor when he suggested the desirability of her attiring herself conventionally before starting for home, and neither commands nor entreaties availed to swerve her from her decision. The only concession she made was to put on the pump with which she had floored her adversary before garroting him.

"Why do you wear that absurd thing?" the Professor demanded, indicating the golden circlet about her bare ankle.

Rosalie raised her stockingless foot and surveyed the slave bracelet about her slim ankle with a look of complacency. "Do you remember where you first met me, my lord?" she answered irrelevantly. "I was not known as Rosalie Osterhaut in the house of Chandri Roi, but as Mumtaz Banjjan, the Lady Moonflower, and sometimes only as Banjjan, the slave-girl. Is it not so?"

"Umpf," Forrester returned uncomfortably. He exceedingly disliked any reference to his ward's experience as an inmate of the zenana, but, in spite of his express commands, she occasionally reverted to the subject.

"Yes," she continued, turning her foot first one way, then another, so that the setting sun's rays played brilliantly on the little golden links which lay against her white flesh. "Yes, I was a slave, a barefooted slave with bangles on my ankles, then, and Forrester Sahib rescued me from a fate far worse than death by torture. On that night I put your foot upon my neck and made public acknowledgment that I was yours by right of conquest and by my own gift, and I wear this little fetter to remind me of my promise."

"But hang it all!" Forrester retorted irritably, "you know perfectly well there's no such thing as slavery in this country, and I wouldn't own slaves if it were allowed. You'd better take that thing off."

The girl bowed her golden head submissively. "Forrester Sahib is my lord and I am his slave," she announced. "If he should desire to beat me I would welcome his blows as the bride thirsts for her bridegroom's kisses; but while Mumtaz Banjjan lives she will not take from off her ankle the symbol of the servitude she would not exchange for an empress' throne. Rather would she kiss the dust of Forrester Sahib's footprints than the lips of any other man upon the earth."

The Professor stuffed his pipe and struck a match. "You're a quaint little baggage, Rosalie—but you've risked your life for mine twice in the last twenty-four hours. Would you like a new fur coat?"

Once more Rosalie inclined her head as though in utter self-abasement; but something very like a smile of satisfaction hovered on her pink lips as she returned in a low voice:

"Forrester Sahib is the lord of Mumtaz Banjjan's life and the breath of her mouth and the blood of her heart. She has no thought nor wish but such as her lord permits; but if it pleases her master to buy his slave a coat—a long coat of otter skin with collar and cuffs of mink, if he pleases—can the slave do aught but humbly accept the token of her master's favor?"

The next Professor Forrester story, "Daughters of the Death's Head," deals with a sensational phase of present-day American life, revealing the incredible things the modern flapper will do in her mad hunt for new thrills. This remarkable novelette will be published complete in the next issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES. Tell the nearest newsdealer to reserve a copy for you.

The Man in the Cask

A Story of Strange Adventures

By VINCENT STARRETT

Here's a brave tale. A tale to startle the most blase. Beginning on a subdued note, it mounts, inevitably, in a crescendo of sheer terror and ends with a smash like a thunderclap. A more absorbing thing we rarely encounter. . . . This is particularly recommended to those who are tired of the usual sort of story.—E.B.

IN the Hotel Esperanza, which is the best hotel in San Angel and the worst in the world, two men sat drinking whisky. They drank morosely and without enjoyment. In the intervals of gloomy conversation they turned their eyes sometimes upon the figure of a third man, who lay upon the bed, and sometimes through the open doorway, across a blistered balcony, to the waterfront beneath.

The sun, half risen from the sea, smoldered on the horizon, but for the most part the sea was pale and silver gray. In the foreground the mists of early morning still streamed above the water, and greenish waves washed the foundations of the pier. Lines of foam rolled in and melted against the sand. In the near distance rose upward a lazy twist of smoke and two bare spars; these served for the moment to mark the inner harbor and the single vessel that lay within.

"It's now or never," said the fat man in dirty pongee, at last. "He goes on the *Stockholm*, or he doesn't go at all."

The somewhat cleaner linen of his companion absorbed another spot of liquor. "Damn him!" said the second man, with a furtive glance at the figure in the bed. "What did he want to die down here for?"

"Don't be an idiot, Hyatt," retorted the first speaker, mildly. "He wanted to die in Oak Grove, Illinois. A hell of a place to die, but that's what he wanted. The least we can do is see that he gets there right side up."

"I know," grumbled the man called Hyatt. "A lovely mess he's left for us. Not an undertaker in a hundred miles—and this devilish sun getting up earlier every morning. Of course Rulofson won't take him."

The fat man checked his tumbler in mid-flight. "Won't take him!" he repeated. "He's *got* to take him. It's our only chance. Rulofson'll get his money."

His leaner companion shrugged. "It isn't a question of money," he answered, with a gesture of impatience, "although there's little enough of that, God knows! He won't take him, that's all. The crew wouldn't stand for it. You ought to know that, Drews. It stands to reason."

The fat man was irritated. "Why ought I to know it?" he demanded querulously. "I'm not in the business. I never tried to ship a body before."

"I *have*," said Hyatt, grimly. "That's why I'm sore at this one. It was downright inconsiderate of him." He glared malevolently at his empty liquor glass, then filled it to the brim from a bottle that stood on the table beside him. "It was decent of him to leave this liquor, anyway," he admitted as an afterthought. "Don't know what we'd have done without it, last night!"

"Why does it stand to reason?" persisted the other. "You ain't going to leave me flat, at this stage, are you? You promised him, too; I heard you."

"I know," said Hyatt, again setting down an empty glass. "Well, I'm not going back on you, nor on him, either. All I said was that Rulofson wouldn't take him; and he won't. Not if he knows it." The speaker looked curiously at his cherubic companion. With his flabby, unshaven jowls and his protruding blue eyes, bloodshot after a night's vigil, Drews was not at all a pretty sight. "You knew Galloway pretty well, didn't you, Drews?"

"I didn't know him a bit," replied Drews, promptly. "Any more than you did. Any more than anyone did. He told me his story when he came down here; and I didn't tell him he was a damned fool not to shoot the other man, that's all. That's what everyone else had told him, and he was getting tired of hearing it. So he sort of cottoned to me."

Hyatt nodded, a bit absently, and filled his companion's glass. "Who was the woman?" he asked. "I suppose there's no secret about any of it, now?"

"His wife," said Drews. "He'd probably have told you, himself, if he'd lived long enough. He liked you pretty well. You and I were about the only friends he had, I guess."

"I saw her picture, once," remarked Hyatt, thoughtfully. "He opened his locker for a minute, and it was in the tray, face up. She's a beauty; I'll say that for her. . . . Sounds a bit like the old story, eh?"

"Old as—as all that!" said the fat man. With a ludicrous but comprehensive gesture, he embraced the spectacle beyond the open door, the sea and the sky and the red sun lying on the water. "She left him flat for the other fellow. Kind of a nasty mess, I guess. There weren't any kids; so he packed up a few clothes and came away. Went to Mexico first, but it didn't suit him. Too many people. He hated people. Then somebody told him this was the damndest place in creation—when it is—and he came here."

"Divorced?"

"Not that he ever heard of. Maybe she was waiting for two years to run, so's she could call it desertion. This'll be just as good. It's a damn sight more complete."

The narrator glanced apprehensively toward the bed and brought his eyes back to the table. His thick, nervous fingers closed convulsively about the base of his tumbler. With a deep sigh, intended to indicate sympathy, he gulped down half the contents of the glass. There was a moment of silence in which Hyatt's eyes strayed also to the bed.

"I never saw a man drink himself to death quicker," testified the second man, a note of admiration in his voice. "Was he always that way?"

"Ever since I knew him. He said his wife used to call him a 'rum pudgeon,' whatever that is. Anything looked good to him, so long as it was liquor. I've seen

him stretched out so stiff you'd think he'd been dead for weeks."

In the pause that followed, Hyatt turned restlessly in his chair. "Where is *she*?" he asked, at length.

"Oak Grove," said Drews, "as far as I know. That's where she *was* anyway. And it's where Galloway is *going*," he added with determination. "His brother lives there yet; I've got his address."

Hyatt nodded vaguely. "All right," he agreed. "But I'm telling you, Drews, Rulofson won't take him—if he *knows* it!"

The fat man's chair rasped along the boards. Its occupant puffed slowly to his feet and ambled to the door. His glance settled upon the spars in the harbor and the line of smoke that went straight up, now, between them. Hyatt joined him in the doorway. The comparative coolness of dawn was vanishing before the intensifying rays of the sun.

"He's got to know," said Drews, at last. "Good God, we can't nail him up and call him books, or gunpowder!"

"Listen," said Hyatt, in a low voice, as if he feared that the dead might have ears. "Come out here on the balcony. Look at that damned sun, will you! We're in for another hellish day, Drews, and I've had enough of them. I'm sick of San Angel, and San Everything. I'm sick of the whole damned peninsula, and all the islands of the sea . . . Do you know what Rulofson is taking north, Drews?"

"Rum!" exploded the fat man, almost profanely. "The only decent liquor in the vicinity, except what's left in that bottle."

"Yes," agreed Hyatt, "that's what he's carrying—rum. A hundred hogsheads of it from this very port; this very pesthole. Well?"

The fat man's eyes were held by those of his companion; after an instant they fell before the significance of Hyatt's gaze. "I'm afraid I don't get you," muttered Drews.

"Yes, you do," said Hyatt, with a hard smile. "It's the only way, Drews; I'm telling you. If you know a better way, let's hear about it. Where's your undertaker? Where's your—"

He ended his sentence abruptly and pointed with circling finger.

"Look at that! The first of ten thousand, perhaps, inside of six hours."

A great green fly was humming about their heads in aimless geometric designs. Suddenly, as they watched it, it darted in through the open door. Drews felt his scalp prickle under his short bristle of hair. He ran his fingers over the stubble.

"The rum shipment is our only chance," continued the dispassionate voice of his companion. "You don't think I'm keen about the job, myself, do you? I'd rather take him up on the hill, where we buried the poor old Mex. But it's a long journey Galloway's got to take, and if he's to arrive without premature discovery. . . ." He shrugged. "Of course, we'll have to tell the brother! You'd better write him a letter, explaining why. It'll get posted at New Orleans."

He turned to enter the room, but paused for a moment on the doorsill and looked back. "And Drews," he added casually, "you needn't do any worrying about Rulofson. I'll take care of all that. The fact is, I'm going along, myself—all the way—to see that Galloway gets home to his brother's house."

II

CAPTAIN ANDREW RULOFSON was as jovial a soul, in those days before the war, as ever carried a rum cargo across the gulf. He flew two flags, that of

Sweden and that of the United States of America, and he was himself a teetotaler. Also, he was passionately addicted to loud music. In the wireless room of the *Stockholm*, which for several reasons had been stripped of its outfit and its operator, he had installed an electric piano, for which he had paid seven hundred dollars in an American port.

There was an electric wall socket in the room, which the captain alternately used for lighting purposes and for operating the piano, since he could not do both at once. He was very proud of his lamp and his piano, both of which his wife had refused to have about the house. The light, however, was unnecessary when the instrument was in action, for with the first crashing chords the entire front panel, which was of colored glass tricked out with clouds and turrets, lighted up from behind like a proscenium. The range of the piano's repertoire was not great; it played four melodies, of which a smashing march called *Blaze Away* was the captain's favorite; but for what it lacked in versatility it made up in volume. There was nothing like it on the high seas.

Hyatt shared the wireless room with a filthy Mexican parrot. The parrot's cage hung in a corner, far enough from the L not to bang, and the door at all times stood open. The parrot was accustomed to freedom, although it seldom left the room, and the top of the piano had become its promenade. It sulked for a time after the intrusion of a stranger, but soon regained its arrogance and swaggered as bravely as before. Its vocabulary was largely Spanish, and was surprisingly adequate to emergency.

In the captain's absence, Hyatt cursed the bird bitterly. He did not like his bunk, which lay crosswise of the ship, having been originally a bench clamped strongly to the wall just opposite the piano. The vessel was not outfitted, however, for passengers. When it rolled gently in the long swell of the Mexican gulf, the movement was pleasant and soporific but when it pitched in headlong plunges the occupant of the bed clung grimly to its side to keep from being thrown to the floor. In the intervals of storm the parrot always swore raucously. Hyatt devoted some time to its education, trying to teach it a ribald ballad, only the chorus of which was beyond reproach. He ended by calling the bird by the title of the song, which was *La Cucharacha*, or "The Cockroach," because of its abominable habits.

Only Hyatt knew of the second passenger carried by the *Stockholm*, and for the most part he was able to keep his mind free of the knowledge. He was not a squeamish man. Occasionally there crossed his vision a picture of the consternation he might create by a chance slip of the tongue; but he knew there would be no such slip. More often his mind ran upon the events that would succeed the arrival of Galloway at his brother's home, when he—Hyatt—was free to go about his own business in his own way. The letter that he carried in his pocket would be mailed at New Orleans, and it should reach the small town in Illinois some days before his own more portentous arrival. Galloway's effects were in his locker, now shipshape and upright at the end of the bunk. It had furnished a new and popular rostrum for the green parrot. Hyatt had opened it only once, and then he had not delved beneath the level of the tray. He was not a curious man.

Sometimes he set the portrait he had taken from the tray against the rack of the piano, and gazed at it for a long time. At such times his mind raced with delicious possibilities, although he had set himself no program. His imaginings were in no sense reticent. It was unfortunate, he thought, that the photograph was only a head, but he had no difficulty in finishing the picture

to his taste. The information he carried would be sufficient introduction to any woman. He wondered if she would be at the funeral.

At times the captain joined him in the wireless room, and they sat and smoked in a darkness lighted only by the glare of the piano, while that extraordinary instrument filled the cabin with its martial uproar. When the smoke became too thick they opened the door, and the strains rushed out into the wind and darkness with curious effect. Sometimes they sat in blackness and exchanged boisterous stories, while the green parrot rustled in its cage in the corner.

When they were six nights out, and three bells had just gone in the darkness, the captain entered the wireless room in somewhat of a temper. His cigar was at a truculent angle.

"Damn those fellows forward!" he said vigorously. "They've got at the rum, some of 'em, and they're drunk as fools. I've just been down in the hold, with the mate, trying to get a line on what they've been up to; but you might as well look for a particular stone on the shore as one barrel in a bunch like that. If you ever turn skipper, Mr. Hyatt, don't carry any more liquor than the law allows, so to speak. I don't touch it myself, and I try to get a crew that won't touch it—but you can imagine what luck I have in that direction!"

For a moment Hyatt's heart stood still. Then he laughed easily.

"Trying to put something over on you, are they?" he asked. "How long d'ye suppose they've been at it?"

"God knows!" said the captain, with gloomy emphasis. "Ever since we left port, maybe. I had a crew like that, once before. They began quiet and easy; just a little here and there, thinking it wouldn't be noticed. But by the time we were out a week, damned if they weren't bold as brass about it, and drunk nearly every night."

"What do you do about it?" asked the passenger, concealing his interest with a yawn.

"What *can* I do? I give 'em hell, of course! If they don't stop, I beat some of them up. And you can bet I drop them all at the end of the voyage. But what's accomplished if you only get another bunch just like them?"

"You might increase their allowance," suggested Hyatt, helpfully.

"Increase nothing!" asserted the captain, with picturesque additions. "Give 'em an extra inch, and they want an extra pint. The more you give 'em the more they want. I'll give 'em hell, that's what I'll give 'em! And the only effect it'll have," he added with a snort, "is that they'll be more careful next time not to get caught."

He crossed his legs philosophically, then uncrossed them to lean forward to the wall socket.

"Damn' swine!" he observed, viciously shoving home the plug. With a crash of brass, his favorite masterpiece blared forth to soothe the mariner's nerves.

Throughout the concert that followed, Hyatt's mind was busy. If the rum stealers, by some fiendish chance, were to hit upon the particular hogshead that was his especial care, a disturbing situation might result. He thought it all over, carefully, and made up his mind.

"Look here, Captain," he said, as the skipper prepared to depart, "if you find any more of this drinking going on between meals, as it were, I wish you'd tip me off when you start to investigate. I've got a cask of my own down there, you know. I'd like to take a look at it."

It sounded a bit weak and childish, after he had said it. The burly captain paused in his retreat to grin back at his passenger.

"Don't you fret about that cask of yours, Mr. Hyatt," he chuckled. "It's safer than any of 'em. Those fellows ain't fools. They wouldn't tap a barrel that was all ticketed and addressed. Any time you want to go down and look at it, why help yourself; I'll send Peterson down with you; but it ain't necessary. It'd be a big job to find it, anyway."

He waved a cheerful hand and disappeared in the darkness. Hyatt followed slowly. He paused in the shelter of the doorway to light a cigar, then stepped out onto the upper deck. The night was as perfect as any he had ever known, but he gave it no attention.

For a long time he stood at the rail, thinking, and watched the dark water creaming at the ship's side. He was more than half tempted to take Rulofson into his confidence, to throw himself upon the discretion of that temperate mariner and have the infernal cask dropped quietly overboard. It was getting to be a nuisance and a care. Heaven knew what difficulties awaited him in the States. He might even be arrested as Galloway's murderer, if the thing should be investigated. For that matter, Rulofson might leap to the same conclusion, if he were told, crazy as the idea would be. If he had murdered Galloway, the adventurer told himself, he would hardly be idiot enough to travel about the world with the body of his victim.

It occurred to him to wonder if Galloway's brother would thank him for the astonishing visitation. There were only the pleadings of the dying Galloway himself to justify the enterprise, and only Drews' fatly sentimental letter to prepare the way. He himself would be as well received if he brought neither the letter nor the cask. However, the letter would probably be useful. The trouble was that the letter told about the cask.

"Damn him!" said Hyatt, bitterly, repeating an earlier remark. "What did he want to die down there for?"

However, if Galloway had not died in San Angel, his friend Hyatt would not now be making his way northward to carry the welcome tidings to the lady of the portrait. The thing seemed to travel in a circle.

He had enough money now to buy some decent clothes in New Orleans, and that was a comfort. The money left by Galloway would hardly be enough to pay both their fares, in other circumstances, but as matters stood it was adequate for the absolute needs of the venture. Expressing a cask could be no great expense; and no doubt there was plenty more money in Oak Grove.

He returned to the dubious company of the parrot, and lay down upon his bunk, face upward in the darkness. His doubts slowly quieted. Again and again his imagination pictured the days that would follow his arrival, and at the height of his dreams he writhed in anthropoid ecstasy. Then he dozed gently, and in a little while the throb of the tramp's engines lulled him to sleep.

III

A WEEK later there was another scare. He sat alone in the darkened room that he called his cabin, as the minutes ticked on toward morning. It had been hours since he had seen the captain, and the time for a visit from Rulofson was long past. Before beginning to undress, he stepped out onto the deck, and at the same instant from somewhere below arose a confused murmur of voices, in the pauses of which he distinguished the heavier speech of the missing captain. He listened with keen attention. Something out of the usual had occurred.

For a time the babble seemed to increase in volume, and twice the captain's voice ascended to him as a roar. Then the confusion subsided, and shortly thereafter Rulofson appeared at the head of the ladder. His actual advent was preceded several seconds by his lark-like whistle, which rose gaily out of the darkness below. Obviously, Rulofson was feeling happy about something.

"And that ends that," observed the captain, cheerily, as he noticed his passenger leaning against the rail.

"I thought I heard a shout below," explained Hyatt.

"So you did," agreed the captain, still cheerily, "several shouts, if you listened well. You'll be glad to know that your barrel's safe from now on. The crew have just taken the pledge."

"Good God!" said Hyatt, almost reverently. He was more alarmed than he dared to show. For a hideous moment there rose to his mind a picture of the guilty cask, isolated, stark, and damning, on the lower deck, its head knocked in, its . . .

He recovered himself quickly and contrived a smile. Rulofson was bending nearly double with suppressed laughter. He had exploded into mirth, silently and suddenly.

"Funniest thing I ever saw!" he gasped, after a moment; and Hyatt breathed at greater ease. If what Rulofson had seen was something funny, there was no cause for alarm.

"The whole crew's sworn off," continued the captain, mirthfully. "One of 'em was down in the hold again, stealing liquor for the rest of 'em. It seems they've been tapping just one cask; the same cask everytime. I got the whole story out of them before I was through. It's a story for a temperance lecturer, Mr. Hyatt. As a teetotaler, I think I'll take the platform."

"It must have been good," admitted Hyatt, cautiously. He was again profoundly alarmed. "Do you mind telling me about it?"

"Well," said the captain, with a joyous giggle, "it seems that they've been at it all evening. They began early, and two of 'em took turns going down after more. Then they began to get cheerful, so that they didn't give a damn; and finally they began to show it. Peterson sniffed it on them and came and told me what was going on. Well, we found one of them dead drunk in his bunk, and one man missing. The missing man was in the hold getting more liquor; and just as we started after him, up he came. He came up all by himself. And *did* he come up *fast*! His eyes were sticking out of his head, and he was so scared he couldn't scream. You'd think he'd seen a ghost! All he could say was, 'In the barrel! There's a man in the barrel!' And some of the crew laughed, and some of them nearly died—from fright!"

The captain laughed heartily.

"I never saw a man so scared, and some of the others were almost as bad. Those that were drunk, you know. Well, I asked this fellow, of course, what he was talking about. 'How do you know there's a man in the barrel?' I asked him. And he said, 'Before God, Captain, I heard him! The barrel was nearly empty, and I tilted it, just a little; and he *thumped* inside! Thumped around like he was in there, *drowned*!' Did you ever hear such damned nonsense in your life?" asked Rulofson with a final chuckle.

Hyatt, breathing deeply, asserted that he never had. "It's a perfect madness," he declared. "Isn't it?" He listened for the captain's reply.

"Of course it is," said Rulofson triumphantly. "It's D. T's., that's what it is; and serves him right, too. But to quiet the rest of the crew, I sent Peterson down into the hold, with another man to show him the cask. The

first fellow wouldn't go down again. And, of course, everything was all right, just as it always is. But it's solved one problem for me. There'll be no more rum-stealing on this ship. I'll be lucky if the men'll get out the casks for me when we make port."

He treated himself to another chuckle, and departed, whistling. A grand teetotaler was Captain Andrew Rulofson.

Hyatt staggered to his bunk and fell across its length. After a period of frantic thought, he drew a long breath of relief, and immediately went back to his thinking. It occurred to him that he badly needed a drink. Then he thought with particularity of the drinking done by the crew, and rose quickly and went out into the night.

As he leaned weakly across the rail, another figure appeared at the top of the ladder, and the mate, Peterson, came noiselessly to his side.

"Ain't turned in yet, eh, Mr. Hyatt?" smirked the mate, with solicitude. "I don't blame yuh. Yuh look sick enough for two men. That's a pretty nasty business down there in the hold. Gave me quite a turn for a minute."

"What are you talking about?" snapped Hyatt, with sudden savagery. He felt his strength return with a rush, and his vehemence carried him forward a step toward the newcomer.

But the mate only laughed and moved backward a pace.

"Forget it!" he chided, with perfect good humor. "I'm not talking about it to anybody but *you*. But it ought to be worth a *little* something to a poor man, if I help you get it ashore."

For an instant Hyatt's brain was a murderous whirl of red; then it cleared, and he indicated the open door of his cabin.

"Inside," he ordered in a hoarse whisper. "Come inside, you damned fool!"

The door closed after them. In his private corner of the darkness, the green parrot listened with cocked head to the low murmur of their voices. No word was said that sounded familiar.

IV

ON the dock, separated from its fellows, the cask appeared peculiarly sinister and alarming. To Hyatt, standing nervously by, it seemed that all who passed must surely read its hideous secret. The less imaginative Peterson went calmly about his duties, with untroubled conscience. He had personally removed the cask to a quiet spot out of the immediate rush, and he paused in intervals of activity to wink reassuringly at his accomplice.

It had been the notable genius of Peterson that had suggested an additional precaution. He had pointed out that, since a beginning had been made, it might be as well to drain the cask dry, thus diminishing the danger of a revelation similar to that which had shocked the sailors. A long train journey still lay ahead of the itinerant Galloway, he had explained, and the temptations of men are of a kind in all nations.

"Now," he added, when the furtive business had been accomplished, "he might be *anything*, for all anybody knows—potatoes, or hardware, or a roll of linoleum. S'long as they ain't any liquor washing around, nobody 'll bother to look."

Hyatt sighed with relief when at last the thing had been deposited with the proper agent. In the sweet release of the moments that followed, he realized how heavily the cask had weighed upon his nerves. He was almost grateful to the mate for his assistance, and the

two separated at the dock with every assurance of mutual esteem.

"'Bout eight o'clock," said Peterson. "Don't forget! And don't come too early, or the skipper'll be around, and he might get curious."

"Eight o'clock," echoed Hyatt. "I'll be there."

He would be, too. He knew very well that he would not dare to fail. How much of the story Peterson believed, only Peterson knew. He had appeared to believe it all. Yet one word of doubt dropped in the wrong quarter, and there would be some difficult questions to answer.

Peterson's blackmailing greed would leave barely enough for transportation and the barest necessities. The handsome arrival suit would have to go the way of dreams, thought Hyatt bitterly. The hat he wore would have to answer. He compromised, at length, on a second-hand serge and a cravat of livid purple. These, with his battered felt and the bronzed face beneath it, gave him somewhat the appearance of a reservation Indian to whom the Great White Father had just issued a new outfit. He dined meagerly at a glittering Greek café, and afterward cautiously counted his money—Galloway's money. There was very little left. Fortunately, he had not promised the mate any specific sum; he had spoken vaguely of "money." Shortly before the hour appointed for the meeting he strolled back to the docks, and on the stroke of the hour boarded the ship. Peterson was already awaiting him in the wireless room. A pint flask of whisky stood on the piano, against the music rack, and the room was filled with the reek of bad liquor.

Hyatt came to the point immediately.

"You see how it is," he concluded. "The *real* money is at the other end of the trip. What I've got left will just about get me there, and feed me on the way. You get fifty now—all I can spare—and a couple of hundred later."

The mate was surprisingly amiable. "'S all right, ol' man," he said affectionately. "Don't worry 'bout the monish. Know jus' how 'tis! Tired o' this damn' ship, anyway. I'll go 'long *with* you—help get the monish."

"You will like blazes!" retorted Hyatt, with swift suspicion. "I can take care of that, myself, Peterson. You'll get your money, don't worry about that."

"Not worrying, ol' man," said the mate. "Wanna go 'long, anyway. Tired o' this damn' ship. . . . Get monish, plenty monish, eh? Open cigar store, eh? Get married, eh? Tired o' this damn' ship. 'S all right, ol' man. Not worrying."

It was plain that Peterson had reached certain definite conclusions, and at least one decision. Also, that within the hour he had been doing some important drinking. It was possible that the one was the result of the other.

At any rate, thought Hyatt, the man was more nearly at his mercy than at any time before. He took the bull by the horns. Grasping the mate by the shoulders he shook him vigorously.

"Come out of it, you damned fool!" said Hyatt. "Listen to me. You're not going with me. Do you understand? This is my party, and you're not invited. Have you got that straight? I've got trouble enough without having to look after a drunken Swede. You'll get your money as soon as I get it. This ship sails again in ten days, and you sail with her. You'll have your money in plenty of time. I'm not trying to gyp you."

In his growing anger, he shook the mate more violently than he had intended. Peterson, at first helpless in the sudden grip, sobered under the treatment. His hands flew up to break the other's grasp, and failing, closed viciously about Hyatt's throat. Then each, surprised by

the swiftness with which affairs had turned, relaxed his hold. The men stood eye to eye in the darkness, breathing heavily. In its cage in the corner the green parrot squawked and fluttered its clipped wings.

Something told Hyatt that this was an end of diplomacy. No amount of money now would serve to close the mate's mouth. Whatever Peterson might promise, under stress or otherwise, he was not to be trusted. The best that could be expected was an extended campaign of blackmail. The adventurer's brain functioned slowly, but with increasing clarity as the seconds passed. His arms dropped to his sides, his hands became iron knots. Then the right fist lashed perpendicularly upward on a line with Peterson's jaw.

It was a blow that should have broken the mate's neck; but Peterson had sensed its coming and had ducked. Its violence spun its author about so that he fell sidewise against his adversary. They grappled, and for a moment the black room seemed to whirl as each fought for an advantage. The flask of whisky toppled and went down with a liquid crash. The combatants slipped and skidded in the spilled liquor. The parrot, forgetting its vocabulary, screamed shrilly and constantly in its own tongue.

As suddenly as it had begun, the fight ended. Hyatt, gaining a momentary hold, crushed the mate's body against his own, then flung it from him into a corner of the darkness. With clenched fists he sprang forward to follow up his advantage, and at the same instant Peterson freed his knife from its sheath and lunged upward. For a split second the adventurer from San Angel seemed to rise upon his toes and teeter there; in the next instant he pitched forward against the wall, then slid quietly to the floor.

Peterson staggered to his feet and stood rocking. After a moment he stooped and felt cautiously for his knife, which the falling body had torn from his grasp. There was no sound from the vague heap in the corner, no movement. With ears alertly cocked, the mate listened for noises from without; there was only the slap of water against the ship, a familiar and reassuring sound. Even the parrot had subsided.

Groping in darkness, the mate's hand encountered a swinging electric cord. It might be that of the lamp, and it might be the piano cord. He shrugged. What difference? With his other hand he traced the socket in the wall, and thrust home the plug. The mechanism of the piano clicked loudly and a blaze of colored light sprang out of the panels. Clouds and turrets glowed in the darkness as if by magic, and the inspiring strains of *Blaze Away* crashed in the narrow room.

Peterson's nerves jumped acutely, and he stepped quickly to the door. His eyes, from that distance, sought out the face of the man who lay upon the floor; but the face was turned away. It seemed to be buried in the boards. Then the glint of his knifeblade caught the mate's eye. With a little frightened rush he recovered the weapon, and instantly snatched at the electric cord. Cloud and turret faded out as if they had never been, and the music lapsed with a suddenness that left the silence painful.

Outside, with the door closed behind him, Peterson looked for a moment at the water and the vessel that he was leaving. By morning the hue and cry would be up and abroad, and he must be well upon his way. It did not matter now which way, as long as it was not toward the Illinois township. That way would lie difficulty and perhaps dangerous explanations. That way lay the objective of the infernal cask, the never-sufficiently-to-be-execrated cask, now peacefully jogging northward toward revelation. If it should happen to

prove an object of interest upon the journey, the resulting situation might jump with exciting possibilities. It would be roughly handled by strangers, many times, and strangers again possibly would hear the eerie *thump* of Henry Galloway.

On the records of the express company appeared the name of Robert Hyatt, shipper, and in the wireless room of the *Stockholm* lay the body of Robert Hyatt. He had been fairly slain in a fight that he had himself begun; but only a green parrot had been witness to the provocation and the assault.

Some such thoughts, less coherently organized, ran in the mate's mind. Hyatt's burden now had become his own, and who would believe the story he would have to tell? He only half believed it himself. Damn Hyatt! Damn him for a damned fool! Damn Rulofson and his rum and his churchy principles! Damn Galloway, and his damned brother, and his damned widow!

A stirring of limbs, somewhere below, called the blasphemer back to the immediate present. He ran quickly down the ladder and crossed the lower deck with swift strides. Disdaining the three feet of water that lay between the moored vessel and the dock, he leaped lightly ashore and in a moment had disappeared in the shadows of the warehouses.

V

THE following morning, in Oak Grove, Illinois, a letter, addressed to Mr. Horace Galloway, was duly received at the postoffice and duly readdressed and forwarded to that gentleman at Granite Basin, Oregon, whither he had removed some months before.

The cask reached Chicago on the succeeding Saturday, and departed for Oak Grove on an afternoon truck piloted by a husky chauffeur with two formidable assistants. An earnest attempt was made to deliver it at the erstwhile home of Horace Galloway, and a vast amount of language was wasted between the truckmen and the current inmates of the dwelling.

"What'm I going to do with it?" demanded the foremost spokesman, truculently. "Take it home for the kids to play with? My orders was to leave it here."

"I keep telling you," said the woman who thwarted him, "the postoffice has Mr. Galloway's new address. It's somewhere in Oregon."

"Oregon! What d'ye think this is, a box of candy?" continued the truck driver, with ironic emphasis. "Think it's a parcel post package? Take a look at it!"

"I don't want to look at it, and I don't care what you do with it," snapped the harassed woman, at last. "You can take it to Mrs. Henry Galloway, if you like. I don't care."

This was an idea that found favor with the truckmen. "Where's she live?" asked the spokesman, briskly. "Who is she? His mother?"

"She's his sister-in-law," said the woman in the doorway, "and she lives up there across the tracks. The big house on the hill."

She added further minute details, and the mollified truckmen departed. Their suspicions of the cask were profound and jovial, although just why a cask that reeked of rum should not also sound like rum was a problem that puzzled them. The truck rattled through the streets and the cask jolted merrily against the tail-board.

"Seems to be some sort of a party goin' on," commented the driver, as they came in sight of the house. "Maybe we'll get a handout. Say, d'ye suppose this damn' thing is liquor? It sure smells like it."

He turned his chariot into the long drive. The truck climbed slowly upward toward the festive scene, the gravel crunching at every revolution of the wheels.

A party of men and women at ease upon the upper lawn turned at the sound of the wheels. A slender woman in the group pointed suddenly and detached herself from the party. A tall man came quickly to her side, and together they watched the approach of the truck. After a moment they walked forward to meet it. The driver spoke quickly over his shoulder, and one of his huskies ripped away the addressed card that had been tacked to the cask.

"Mrs. Henry Galloway?" asked the spokesman, in a loud voice, and added immediately: "Big barrel from New Orleans."

The rest of the party was advancing across the descending lawn. It arrived in time to hear the protests of the hostess.

"It must be a mistake," she was saying. "I don't understand it at all. Who would be sending me a barrel from New Orleans?"

"Don't know, lady," answered the driver. "It had your name on it, that's all we know. The card got torn off while we was handling it." He glanced apprehensively behind him at the floor of the truck. The card was not in evidence.

"Are there any charges, driver?" asked the tall man, who stood at the woman's side. "Well, we'd better have it off the truck. We can see what it contains afterward."

"We'll see what it contains now," said the slender woman, sharply. "I don't like mysteries. I hope this isn't one of your jokes, Howard. I shan't forgive you, if it is, for interrupting the party."

"Don't be silly, Alice," he replied. "I know nothing about it. It smells like very bad liquor, to me." He bent toward her, and asked in a low voice: "It couldn't be anything that Henry has sent, I suppose? You haven't heard from him?" He turned to the driver. "All right! Roll it over here onto the lawn. Mrs. Galloway wants it opened. She thinks there may have been a mistake."

The three truckmen descended and let down the tail-board. They lowered the huge cask to the roadway, laid it upon its side, and rolled it toward the lawn. It rolled without effort, and at every turn Henry Galloway thumped drearily within. On the sloping lawn the cask was set upright, and braced at its farther side with a stone, to keep it level. One of the truckmen produced a hammer and a chisel. He inserted the latter at an advantageous point between the edge of the cask and the upper metal rim, and struck it a few sharp blows with the hammer. In a moment the hoop broke and was wrenched aside, releasing the boards across the top.

The workman stepped back, and at the same instant the curious group pushed forward with craning necks. The tall man inserted a hand at the edge and tugged at the boards. With a protesting creak, the circular top came away from its groove at all sides, and Mrs. Henry Galloway leaned quickly toward the opening.

"It's not liquor," said the tall man. "It's . . ."

"Henry!" screamed Mrs. Henry Galloway.

Reeling with nausea, the man made no effort to catch her as she fell. After a moment, "God!" he said softly.

A passing autoist brought his car to a sudden stop and stared wildly up the hill for an explanation to the shrieks that seemed to have burst at once from a dozen human throats. He determined to say something about it to the next policeman he met.

The Runaway

By
AL PETERS

THE man who hesitatingly approached Detective Manners was obviously of the servant class.

Manners sat alone in the upstairs room of the station. He watched the man cross the room.

"Excuse me, sir," said the stranger, "but are you the detective in charge?"

"Yes," said Manners. "What can I do for you?"

The man glanced about him, and, seeing they were alone, he sighed and sat down heavily beside the desk.

"I—I dislike doing this," he began, "but I feel it my duty. The madame was always good to me. We thought it best that a report be made to the police."

Manners sat up. "Who are 'we'?" he asked.

"Why, the cook, the second butler, and the maids, sir. And myself. I am head of the servants."

"You'd better begin at the beginning," said Manners.

The butler nodded gravely. "That's right. I am John Fisher, and I have been in the service of Mr. Samuel Ryan for ten years. This is a delicate matter I am about to confide in you. The madame, who is a good many years younger than the master, has completely disappeared. The master's disposition is jealous;

he was very jealous of the madame, because of his nature and because she, being much younger than he, liked to go out and enjoy herself, dancing and the like. Since she disappeared, four nights ago, the master has scarcely stirred from his rooms."

Manners had taken this in with professional ear, discounting the story because of servants' usual gossip.

"Probably Mrs. Ryan has just gone away for a time," he said easily.

The butler shook his head. "I do not think so. According to her maid, none of Mrs. Ryan's clothes are missing, except those she wore the night she disappeared."

This seemed to interest the detective. He drummed on the desk for a moment with his stubby fingers; then he rose and took up his hat, setting it at a jaunty angle.

"Come along," he said. "We'll go out and see Mr. Ryan. He'll be able to set matters straight."

The butler hesitated. "I would not wish him to know that I had reported the matter—"

"All right. Give me the directions, and I'll give you a chance to get to the house first."

IT was almost ten p. m. when Manners stepped to the bell of the Long Island mansion set off by itself in immense grounds.

The second butler answered the door.

"I want to see Mr. Ryan," said Manners. "If he asks who it is, say it's the police."

The butler nodded understandingly. Evidently he was in league with Fisher. He asked Manners to come inside, and then went up the broad staircase.

He came down a minute later, looking frightened.

"He—he refuses to see you, sir," he said. "He's in a terrible state. Perhaps you'd better come back—"

Manners shook his head roughly. "I'll go up," he said. "I'll make him talk to me."

"But—" began the butler, trying to stand in his way, though in a half-hearted fashion.

"I'll tell him I pushed my way in," said the detective. "Don't worry."

He went swiftly up the stairs, the butler behind him. "Where's his room?"

The butler pointed to a closed door.

Manners knocked with no uncertain fist upon the closed door. A heavy voice growled out a question.

"Detective Manners of New York City headquarters," called the detective through the closed door.

"Go away. I don't want to see a detective."

"The detective wants to see you, though," said Manners. "Open the door."

The voice showed the rage of the man inside.

"I'll break you, man, if you don't leave my house. What do you mean by forcing your way in here? I've given you fair warning: go away."

"If you don't open the door, I'll be forced to break it in," answered the detective, ignoring the threat.

A moment later, the door was unlocked from within and flung violently open. Before him stood a tall, sinister-looking man of sixty, hair in disorder, eyes sunken with deep circles about them, and drawn face. He wore a silk dressing-gown over his shirt and trousers, and his feet were encased in leather slippers. In one hand he held a half-smoked cigar.

"Well—now what do you want?" he demanded.

"I want to speak to you," said the detective.

He pushed past the man into the room.

"Your wife has been missing for four days," said Manners, without waiting for the outburst. "Why have you made no report?"

"Who told you this?" growled Ryan.

"The neighbors reported it," said Manners to protect Fisher.

"It's none of your damn business. What do you mean by breaking in this way?"

"It is the business of a policeman to investigate mysterious disappearances," said Manners. "Where is your wife?"

Ryan hesitated. Then he said, "She has gone away on a visit. Now, get out and leave me in peace."

"Where has she gone?"

Ryan's temper was not of the best, and at this persistence he flew into a terrible rage. For fully five minutes he stormed at the imperturbable Manners.

"Go to hell! Get out of my house! I'll break you, my man! You'll pay dearly for this intrusion."

"Where's Mrs. Ryan?" repeated Manners.

"I refuse to speak to you. If you don't go, I'll call my servants and have you thrown out."

Manners looked at the furious man. "If you do that," he said, "I'll be forced to put in a charge of murder against you."

RYAN blanched. He went unsteadily to a large arm chair and sank into it.

"Shut the door," he said at last.

Manners complied, and took a chair opposite Ryan.

"What I am about to say you must hold confidential, strictly confidential," said Ryan.

He stared at the little fire in the fireplace nearby.

"What has happened, then?" asked Manners.

"She has gone away with another man."

"Who's the other man?" asked Manners.

"A young whippersnapper named Carstairs. He lived nearby, and was here a great deal of the time."

"How do you know they went away together? Were they seen?"

Ryan shook his head. "I am certain of it, because

he has disappeared also. His family called me to ask if he was here; he left the night my wife disappeared. They were seen walking together about the grounds at eight o'clock; at ten, I tried to find them and could not."

The detective could see the pain under which the man was laboring, the pain of jealousy and broken pride.

So this was the explanation of Mrs. Ryan's disappearance. Manners mused for a moment upon servants' gossip; then he rose.

"I'll leave you, then," he said. "I'm sorry I intruded."

Ryan spoke no more; Manners left him with his head sunk on his breast, staring at the fire.

Downstairs, Fisher, the butler, was waiting.

"Well," said the man, "did you find out what happened to the madame?"

Manners nodded. "She's gone away on a visit to a sick aunt," he said. "Don't worry about her. It's all right."

He left the house and went back to headquarters.

Next afternoon, he made a trip to the town on the outskirts of which Ryan lived. There he made inquiries concerning George Carstairs, the man Ryan said had run away with his wife, Elizabeth. The Carstairs' home was not so pretentious as Ryan's; the grounds were smaller and not so well kept. Carstairs, a large blond man of thirty-five, had lived with his parents. He had the reputation of being rather fast.

Manners had a description of the woman, Elizabeth Ryan, as small, dark-haired, pretty.

"It's none of my business now," he thought.

But the picture of the sad husband sitting with his head sunk on his breast kept recurring to him.

"I wonder if I could get her back?" he said aloud.

It was worth trying. He made a visit to the home of Carstairs, and questioned the parents of the man, two old people who answered him politely but with a great deal of constraint. Evidently they knew or guessed where their son was. But they could not disclose his whereabouts to Manners.

The detective managed to steal a picture of the young man from a mantelpiece. He already had acquired one of Mrs. Ryan. With these, he broadcast a description of the runaways.

The days ran on, with no news. More cases, cruder and more pressing, took up Manners' thoughts.

Then he had a 'phone call from Fisher, the butler. The man's voice was very excited.

"Come out at once," said Fisher. "We've found something. Hurry!"

"What is it?" asked Manners.

"Mrs. Ryan's dead body," came the voice. "Hurry!"

THE perplexed Manners arrived after dark, and was met at the station by Fisher.

The butler was very perturbed, and spoke rapidly as the limousine whisked them toward Ryan's home.

"The gardener chanced upon it, sir," said Fisher. "She was but a foot or so under the ground, in the bushes."

"Have you told your master?" asked Manners.

"No. I thought it best to leave everything as it was, until you came. The gardener is guarding the spot."

In an outlying patch of hedge, they found the excited gardener, standing over the grave.

"Look what I've found, sir," he said, holding out a stick to the detective, who was already examining the body of the murdered woman by the aid of his flash.

Manners took the stick. It was a man's heavy cane.

"D'you know whose this is?" he asked.

After an examination, Fisher answered. "It's the master's," he said in a low voice.

"Where'd you find this?" asked Manners.

"It was in the bushes nearby," answered Phillips, the gardener.

An examination of the dead woman's throat showed marks of strangulation; her black hair held dried blood, and after a good look at the cane, Manners concluded that she had been struck upon the head with it.

Manners' mind was working fast. "If Ryan did this," he mused aloud, "we'll find Carstairs' body nearby."

All through the night, and into the morning, they searched for another grave, but in vain.

The exhausted detective at last left the search in the hands of the gardener, and went to the mansion. He discovered Ryan in his apartment.

"Your wife's body has been found," said Manners.

Ryan started. "My God! What do you mean?"

"She's been murdered—struck on the head, and strangled, too. What have you to say?"

"Say? What is there to say? Where is she?"

"Where's Carstairs' body?" the detective asked sternly. "Where did you hide it?"

"I? I hide Carstairs' body? Man, don't you see—he's killed her. *He's killed her!*"

"Your cane struck the blow that either killed your wife or knocked her unconscious," said Manners coldly.

Ryan repeated his denials. He wept when he viewed the body of his wife.

The search for Carstairs' body went on. Ryan was taken into custody. The case was strong against him.

RYAN had been in prison for two weeks, when Manners received a surprise. It was in the form of a message from the police of Chicago. Carstairs had been found, or a man answering Carstairs' description.

Ryan remembered his action—sending out descriptions of Mrs. Ryan and Carstairs—in order to bring back the runaway wife.

The detective went to Chicago.

He found at the police station a large, blond-headed man, with a light beard. Carstairs it was.

He answered Manners' questions wearily.

After some hours of questioning, the prisoner asked for a drink of water. He spoke in a husky tone.

"My God!" he said. "I'll tell you. You're driving me crazy. I'm almost crazy as it is. I can't get it off my mind. I loved her, I loved Elizabeth. I thought she loved me. We were together all the time."

"It was like this: I had been asking her to run away with me. Ryan was jealous of me. Elizabeth and I had been going out a great deal together. She half promised to go with me. That night I called at eight, and she came out with me for a walk. As we passed the rack in the hall, she picked up her husband's cane, and we stepped out into the grounds."

"I argued with her for a full hour; and she said she would never go with me, that she had thought it over, and knew she could not leave her husband."

"I was crazy for her; she had driven me beyond endurance. I tried to pick her up and carry her off; she struck at me with the cane, and I snatched it from her, and in blind frenzy, hit her over the head. In my rage, I grasped her throat as she lay there, scarcely breathing, telling her she must go with me."

"I came to myself a few moments later, and found she was dead. I tried to kill myself there, too; but I was too much of a coward. I buried her hastily, and, throwing the cane in the bushes after wiping it off, ran away. I have been wandering ever since. I'm glad it's all over. I could not have stood it much longer. Yes; I killed her," said Carstairs.

Blackmail

By
STANLEY RUSHTON

ARE you being gripped by a mad passion to use a poison and muck-dripping pen for the sending of an anonymous letter? Have you contemplated using the typewriter to frame a Black Hand epistle?

If so, just bear in mind while spreading the rhetorical poison or attempting to levy blackmail that the chances are the letters will be immediately traced to your pen, and even more swiftly if they are typed.

This is the admonition of James T. Cortelyou, former chief of postal inspectors, recently appointed chief of the Philadelphia District Attorney's staff of detectives.

Frequently the sender of an anonymous letter will use a typewriter in the belief that his handwriting, even if disguised, might provide a clue, but that it would be impossible to trace the typed epistle.

Nothing could be more in error. When you use a typewriter for an unlawful letter you might as well sign it with your own thumbprint, because of all the typewriters in use throughout the entire world, no two, Cortelyou points out, write exactly alike. A typewritten line to the trailer of the poison pen and blackhand letter, such as the postal inspector, is regarded as much an identifying clue as the fingerprints left upon a safe which has just been blown open.

First, the letter goes under a powerful magnifying glass to determine what make of machine was used, and then the class number is ascertained. Now comes the process of elimination after the recipient of the letter has provided a lengthy list of all persons who might feel unfriendly toward him.

Gradually the list narrows down, and then among the suspects it is learned which have had access to such a typewriter as was used. Sounds easy, doesn't it? But first you must qualify as a typewriting expert and rank in the same class as the highly-paid handwriting expert before your testimony would be acceptable.

ONE of the most interesting cases in the Cortelyou records is that of the Black Hand letters which for 17 months completely baffled a corps of inspectors. It has for its finale the arrest in a woodland shack near Coryopolis, Pennsylvania, of a pretty girl thrill-hunter who had been the author of the poison-pen and blackmail letters simply because she gained a "kick" out of being sought.

"In this case," said Cortelyou, "wealthy residents of Coryopolis were in constant receipt of letters demanding amounts which varied from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The letters were typewritten and in each one the recipient was instructed to display willingness to meet the demands by inserting in the personal column of a Pittsburgh newspaper a cipher message contained in the letter.

"For seventeen months this continued. The cipher replies were inserted in the newspaper, but no further move was made. Then I went to Coryopolis to direct the search for the mysterious writer, and was convinced that I was up against the toughest case of my career.

"My check-up showed there was no typewriter in Coryopolis upon which the letters were written, unless it was well concealed. The check-up then extended to those who commuted to a larger town and who would have access to typewriters there.

"While awaiting developments my attention had been attracted at the railway station by a pretty bobbed hair girl of the flapper type who made the daily trip to the larger town, chatting and laughing with her fellow

passengers and appearing to be a general favorite and confidant of girls of her own age and station, who had occasion later to regret having revealed indiscretions to this sympathetic listener.

"My attention became more closely drawn when I noticed that on two evenings each week, instead of alighting from the returning train on the station platform, she jumped down from the opposite side of the coach, forcing her way through brush and over rubbish heaps, and vanishing into a strip of deep woods.

"In the meantime we had been sending some fictitious query to every concern in the other town where a Coryopolis commuter was employed and the replies were coming in typewritten form as we had sought.

"Looking over a batch of these replies, I saw before me the imprint of the same type keys which had struck out the blackmail letters. It was a concern specializing in the collection of bad debts, and three hours later I had learned that the flapper, into whose small pink ears other girls loved to pour their secrets, was employed there as a typist.

"THAT night I had my men planted in the woods into which the girl was accustomed to make her way. I also was under cover near the railroad tracks.

"Sure enough, as the train came to a stop, the girl, clad in a collegiate sweater and white sneakers, swung down from the platform. Carrying a tennis racket and a number of packages, she made her way over the old route.

"Finally, in a clearing which might easily have been hidden from our view even though we'd been searching for it, we saw the shack and a great hulk of a youth in soiled flannels lounging on a bench before it.

"Making certain that my men had surrounded the place, I stepped forward and asked if I might have a bucket of water for the dry radiator of my car which had stalled on a back road near here.

"'He's a—spy, Joe,' shrilled the girl. 'Knock him off!'

"With a shouted curse, the youth—her brother, I later learned—made a grab for an automatic pistol on the window sill, while the girl tried to reach a pump gun standing in a corner. My men were too quick for them, however.

"The girl did succeed in breaking loose for an instant after she had sunk her teeth into the wrist of an inspector, and attempted to destroy some slips of paper which we found were different codes which had been used in the letters. We also found another typewriter, a quantity of stationery which had been used for those baffling letters and lengthy memorandum as to the confidences girl friends had been pouring into her ready ear on the commuters' train.

"The brother, a fugitive because of a series of robberies in which he had sought thrills rather than plunder, and his sister admitted they had planned a series of blackmail and poisonous letters which would have ruined the lives of the foolish flappers who had confessed indiscretions and might have driven one or two brides to suicide.

"Here was an example in which two jazz-age victims, jaded from normal pursuits, had gone forth as thrill-hunters. They confessed they found thrills in seeing the code messages appear in the newspaper personal column in swift reply to their demands."

Here is Lieutenant Burks With a Bang-up Detective Story

The Unofficial Observer

By LIEUTENANT ARTHUR J. BURKS

[This is in the popular Burks manner. High-pressure thrills. Smashing action. Red-blooded excitement. Breathless suspense. And then the devastating climax.]

I GEORGIE SMUTTS, am not clever with a couple of guns, and my only claim to distinction is that I closely resemble the eight ball used in pool games. I am off in the upper story on two things. I am a nut on crime detection, about which I know very little, and am crazier still about airplanes, concerning which I know even less. It is fortunate, I presume, that I have a couple of trick eyes which make it quite impossible for me to fly, else I'd long ago have been picked up on a blotter or carried away in a small wheelbarrow after a sensational crack-up.

My spectacles are the bar between me and aviation; they are shell-rimmed affairs, which make me look like a wise owl of sorts and add to the resemblance between me and the eight ball above referred to. I weigh two hundred and ten pounds, stripped, and have a mania for sticking my snub nose into other people's business, and every time I do it something unforeseen happens.

It's this way: I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth; but a paternal uncle left me some money right after I left school, and I guess there must have been quite a bit of it, since none of my checks has ever come back marked "insufficient funds"—and I'm always writing 'em.

I have a sizeable interest in an airport in the thriving city of San Diego, and one of the DeHavilands is always in readiness for my use. I don't fly it myself, unless we are so high up in the air that the real pilot has enough time to take her over and straighten her out before we hit earth after some idiotic mistake of mine; but I always get a terrific kick out of acting as the unofficial observer in the rear cockpit, where I consider myself monarch of all I survey.

All of which rambling leads up to the fact that I believe that airplanes and crime dovetail in many ways. Crooks use 'em as well as honest men. From this I figure that there is, ready-made, a niche for a brand new kind of detective—of which, as far as I know, I am among the first. Having modestly got that off my chest I shall now proceed with the story.

AT three o'clock exactly, on Friday afternoon last, just as the street door was closing after a busy day in the Merchants' County Bank, which is about eight blocks south of Broadway, in the southeastern portion of San Diego, a quietly dressed stranger stepped inside and moved nonchalantly to the public desk as though to make out a check. Since he had managed to squeeze in before the door closed, the courteous bank employees allowed him to go about his business. They closed the door, however, so that no one else could get in.

The men in the cages were arranging their piles of banknotes in orderly rows, preparatory to locking them up in the vault. A middle-aged woman, with a child by her side, stood at the desk beside the man who had just got through the doors. Her face was covered

with a heavy veil, and she was dressed in black. Every once in a while she thrust a slender white hand under her veil, as though she wiped away an unseen tear.

The man who had forced the doors finished writing his check and moved to the cashier's window. As far as later investigations proved, he paid no attention to the woman in black at the desk he had just left, nor did he once look toward the door, through whose glass the street, with its passing crowds, could be plainly seen. He stepped to the window and thrust his check through with his left hand. His right hand rested on the marble rectangle outside the cage. Or, rather, the side pocket of his coat rested on the rectangle, and his right hand was hidden in the pocket.

"I don't really want to cash this check, buddy," he said conversationally; "but I do want all the money you're wallowing in back there! And I'll drill you if I don't get it!"

The cashier didn't say a word. He was tongue-tied. He hadn't strength enough even to lift his hands. The bandit continued:

"Listen, carefully, son. There are only four officials in this bank besides yourself. I'm not counting the woman and the kid. I can take care of them. Call the other four inside your cage, and if anything in your voice makes them suspicious of me, I'll drill you."

The cashier, knowing after a glance into the black eyes of the unmasked man that the bandit wouldn't hesitate to carry out his threat, immediately raised his voice in a carefully modulated call to the four employees mentioned. These came hurriedly, a bit impatient at this new delay. The bandit waited until they had all entered the cage.

"Put 'em up!" he commanded tersely. "I know you've got a gat or a sawed-off shotgun under the desk, but if any one of you makes a break for it he gets a bullet in him. Now, Mr. Cashier, take this cord and bind their hands."

All of this in an ordinary tone of voice, so that the woman in the veil hadn't even looked around. The bank officials were scared green. The cashier bound his colleagues effectively, the wrists of each behind his back. At a low word of command from the bandit the five were herded into the huge vault in rear of the bank. The woman looked up just as the bound men came into view from behind the cages. The bandit, his eyes moving all about, saw her freeze to immobility.

"Don't move, lady," he called softly. "You are in no danger as long as you obey orders."

The woman turned back to her desk. The little girl, her eyes wide with childish curiosity, spoke. "What's he doin' to all those men, auntie?"

OUTSIDE, half a block away, a young school teacher, with her half-monthly pay check in her hand, was hurrying toward the bank. She had an understanding

with the officials to the effect that, if she were no more than fifteen minutes late, they would always let her into the bank to transact business, since she never left school early enough to reach the bank before closing time. Her mind was busy with the happenings of the day, for she was a very conscientious teacher, who had dedicated her life to the kindergarten. Her thoughts were always on her little charges, waking or sleeping. She never even thought of such things as daylight robberies, living, actually and mentally, in a world of fledgling humans.

She reached the door of the bank and tapped on the glass. No one came for a moment. She pressed her nose to the door and peered in. She saw a veiled, middle-aged lady at the check desk with a little girl, and she saw a man, a gray felt hat on his head as though he were preparing to depart, standing in the wide-open door of the great vault at the rear of the bank. Evidently she was later than she had thought. She could see figures moving inside the vault, but they were indistinct because of the shadows. The man in the door turned and beckoned to the veiled woman. She nodded, took the hand of the girl, and moved past the man into the vault.

Pauline Carson, the young school teacher, tapped once more on the glass. The man in the vault door turned and saw her. With quick strides he approached the door. Pauline saw that he was a stranger, and immediately thought of bank examiners, since on her last visit the cashier had told her the examiner was due shortly. The bandit opened the door, smiled courteously at the young woman, and beckoned her inside.

"This way, madam," he said suavely.

Pauline knew instantly that something was wrong, though she hadn't the ghost of an idea what it was. She stopped dead still.

"Where are you taking me?" she demanded. "Where is the cashier?"

"He's back here," replied the bandit hurriedly. "Come on!"

Pauline allowed herself to be led to the door of the vault. Inside she saw the bank officials herded together, their hands tied behind them—and the veiled woman with shaking shoulders, as though she sobbed her heart out. Of them all, the child seemed the most unconcerned.

The bank robber had now dropped all pretense.

"Get inside, and you won't be hurt," he snapped. "I am a bank robber and I'm in a hurry!"

"I won't go in there! I'll promise not to yell; but I won't go in that vault. It's air-tight."

The bank robber said no further word. He drew his weapon, which up to this time had been inside his pocket, and struck the young woman three savage blows on the temple. She sank to the floor lumpishly, and the bank robber seized her by an ankle, dragging her to the threshold of the vault. He did not enter, however, commanding instead that the woman in the veil seize the younger woman and drag her on in.

Then he closed the vault door.

AT three-thirty exactly I received a call from the Chief of Police.

"I'm notifying everybody interested in crime, Smutts," he told me wildly. "The fellow got away with fifteen thousand dollars! And he killed a woman!"

I noted with a wry grin that he mentioned the loss of the fifteen thousand before he mentioned the killing.

"Any description of the bandit?" I asked.

"Yes. Under thirty. Wore no mask. Evidently a drug addict. Medium height. Light complexion. For God's sake, Smutts, help us out! The papers will ruin us if this egg gets away."

"Should be a pipe to find a guy like that," I retorted

with fine sarcasm. "Any idea which direction he went? What have you done so far?"

"Nobody knows. The woman he slugged gave us the description before she died. She said something about seeing a little red automobile at the curb near the bank, and it wasn't there when the police arrived on the scene, fifteen minutes after the hold-up. Motorcycle police have been hurried to all outgoing roads, Los Angeles Highway, Tijuana road, La Mesa, and the Ocean and Mission beach police have been instructed to cover their roads, moving in toward town."

I hung up the receiver. Then I got an idea. I called the taxicab company and asked if they had received a call for a taxi within the last half hour from anywhere near the Merchants' County Bank. That business of the little red automobile didn't sound exactly right to me. A good hunch, this. A call had just come in from a drug store within three blocks of the bank. They gave me the number of the cab that had been sent. I called the Chief of Police and told him.

It was now almost four o'clock, which is the regular time when our two passenger-carrying DeHavilands take off for Los Angeles. I had just hung up the receiver when the roaring of the Liberties drowned out all other sounds. It is a sound one never forgets. It always thrills me. I decided to have my own 'plane convey the two passenger carriers as far as Oceanside, just for the ride.

I signaled to my own pet pilot. The propeller was spun by a mechanic with more nerve than I'll ever have, and I saw, for the thousandth time, a sight which always makes me feel as though I were king of the world—three sweet-singing DeHavilands tugging at their blocks impatiently, wagging their tails with eagerness to be off. The propellers are invisible, almost, and dust behind the 'planes goes blizzarding across the avenue behind the airport, blotting from view the passing automobiles which scurry across Dutch Flats from Ocean Beach to San Diego.

Then two things happen with startling suddenness. The dust behind the middle DeHaviland clears for a moment, and I see an orange-colored taxicab drawn up at the curb. There is no one in it but the chauffeur, and he is staring at that middle DeHaviland as though he had gone crazy. I note, with a suppressed shout of excitement, the number on the side of the taxicab, and turn to the middle DeHaviland to see what it is all about. Even as I turn, the DeHaviland in question, with the gun full on, the engines howling protest at the heavens, leaps the blocks and hurtles down the field like an airplane gone mad. There is only one passenger in the 'plane, and this one is crouched in the rear cockpit, his right hand, holding something sinister, pressed against the neck of the pilot. The guns of the two other 'planes are cut instantly. In the comparative silence I see police cars, careening like ships in a storm, swing into the avenue from both ends. The chauffeur of the taxicab holds his ground, though he is about as scared a driver as I have ever seen.

I DECIDE not to wait for the police. I am prodded into action by the beckoning hand of my pet pilot, and in a jiffy I am in the rear cockpit of my own 'plane, and we are sweeping into the teeth of the wind for the take-off. The 'plane carrying the bandit is already in the air, madly circling for altitude. My pilot knows his stuff. He lifts her nose in a savage zoom, and when he levels her off we are fifteen hundred feet high.

The 'plane ahead of us has straightened and pointed her nose in the general direction of Tijuana, which is so near that they may make the Border before we can head 'em off. My 'plane is a fast baby, though, and

when we settle on the tail of that bandit's 'plane we're stepping 'em a few, believe me. The wind shrieks through the struts and braces, and the ground below looks, for once, as though it were really moving. We are going around a hundred and forty, I judge.

My pilot lifts her again, then once more. He's trying to get above that other 'plane for a dive. It's no go though, that. I know. That pilot in the other 'plane is a friend of ours. I daren't crash him. If it were just the bandit now, and the loss of a DeHaviland, that would be all right. They still honor my checks, even for enough to buy DeHavilands at regular intervals. We are now six thousand feet up, and the leading 'plane is well below us, and we are gaining. That other pilot knows his stuff, too. Even with a gun against his neck, in the hand of a man who has shown he will use it, that pilot is still doing everything he can to delay reaching the Border.

Then I remember something. That pilot was supposed to make a trip to Los, which means that he has a parachute! Why didn't I think of that before? I yell at my pilot, and the wind drives the words back into my throat until they fetch up with a thud against the soles of my feet. Dumb! Then I jab the pilot in the back and signal for him to dive. He grins at me and lifts both hands to the edge of the cowl. That means it's my party, and I glom onto the joy-stick in my cockpit as though I really knew how to fly. Not quite so much like a rocking chair as when the real pilot is flying, but passing fair. The left wing falls away, and I over-control, causing her to wobble—and my pilot grins.

I point her nose at the other 'plane and give her full gun. She's rather a steep dive and I don't try to bring her up, either. I'm making her shake like a terrier just in out of the rain, and her struts, braces and wires are yelling bloody murder; but I'm so excited about this chase that I open my mouth and yell for all I'm worth, and the yell, like my shout to the pilot, darts back into my throat, chokes me and makes my eyes fill with tears. I blink 'em away and give her more power. We cross over the tail of the other 'plane just as we are above the sands of the Strand, that ribbon of concrete road which leads from Coronado southward to the Tijuana road. There is only one automobile on the road, as far as I can see.

The bandit is standing, crouched forward against the backblast of the other 'plane's propeller, and he shakes his weapon at us as we zip over. I guess he takes a shot at us, but I have the feeling that the bullet wouldn't catch us if we were flying dead away. And the bandit is probably too scared to shoot straight, even if he were on the ground and held his weapon in both hands. It's no snap to hit an airplane. I catch the eye of the other pilot and signal. The bandit catches the signal, but he doesn't know what it means. I bring our 'plane around in a brutal, wing-menacing bank, and prepare to cross over the other 'plane's tail again.

For a moment we hung just above the tail of the other 'plane. The bandit waved his puny weapon at us savagely, and for a moment his eyes were off his own pilot. Said pilot stood up and plunged over the side. I sighed with relief when I saw the knapsack arrangement on his body. He was safe, and out of it, if his parachute opened. Personally, I'm not strong for parachute jumps. Being an eight ball I'd be as likely to jump and forget my parachute as not. So I've never gone in for jumping. Some day, maybe—

I saw the 'chute open her great wings far below the other plane. I swooped down—

And the world suddenly turned topsy-turvy!

MY eyes are not too darned good, as I have said, and I dropped lower than I planned. My trucks crashed into the tail piece of the other 'plane, and in a shake we were turned on our back and going like blazes; but whether up, down, or sidewise I didn't know for a moment. I looked *up* and saw the earth, and the belt across my knees was cutting my thighs in two. But my pilot still was grinning, and his hands looked as though he were trying to pinch pieces out of the sides of the forward cockpit cowl.

I looked *down* and saw the other 'plane, and it was falling *up* toward us. I had sense enough to give her the gun again, and the earth looked entirely too close above our heads. I motioned my pilot and, battling with the stick for a full minute, he brought her out of it in a sort of Immelman Turn. The other 'plane, going down in wide, lazy spirals, flipped past us, and I'll be darned if the bandit in the rear cockpit wasn't grinning! I guess he thought he was getting away with something. I prayed fervently that he would crash in such a way that there would be enough of him left to stand trial for killing Pauline Carson.

The other 'plane settled with unbelievable slowness, as we followed her down—and when she buried her nose in the sand along the ribbon-like Strand we kept on dropping! My pilot looked back at me. His face was white as parchment, as though he were suffering untold agony. He tried to lift his hands to the cowl, signaling for me to take the stick again—or so I thought. I took it—and jammed the controls! We hit the sand a quarter of a mile from where the first 'plane had crashed, coming down in a heap on our left wing, which crumpled like cardboard.

Then the lights went out and the sudden darkness was full of stars.

WHEN I opened my trick eyes there were men in uniform all around us. I felt myself over for broken bones and found I was intact, except for a broken leg and a smashed nose. I tried to talk, and my voice sounded like the mumbling of an octogenarian—which brought home to me the fact that most of my front teeth were missing. Evidently, in the crash, I had tried to bite a piece out of the forward edge of the cowl, with indifferent success. My pilot was okeh, except for a long furrow along his temple under his helmet, where, odd as it may seem, that random bullet from the bandit's pistol had creased him.

"Listen, Ryan," I said weakly. "I have a horrible suspicion! Please look in the after cockpit of that wreck of ours and see if you can find my front teeth!"

Then I saw the bandit. He was manacled to a couple of policemen, while a third policeman was counting a flock of greenbacks from a bag he had just taken from the bandit. The bandit was talking.

"Too much dope," he said. "But I'd have got away with it if it hadn't been for that goggle-eyed bird there with all his teeth knocked out. But I kinda lost my nerve after I left the bank. Something told me I had hit that damned woman too hard, and it shook me. The dope wore off and I got scared as hell. If I hadn't been scared I'd never have got the fool idea that I could get away in one of those 'planes. You damned cops don't give a man any chance whatever."

Inquiry brought forth the information that the pilot who had jumped from the fleeing 'plane had landed without mishap, save for a broken instep when he struck the concrete roadway of the Strand. Everything seemed fine and dandy, and the doctors told me I might get out of the hospital in time to attend the trial of the bank robber. I'll get a great kick out of sitting as close to him as possible, and grinning at him toothlessly.

A panoramic view of New York's underworld, of studio life in Hollywood, of con men and dicks, of counterfeiters and government agents, of thieves and dips and jail birds, and a former chief of police who promotes a private detective bureau for the purpose of snaring all law-breakers, large and small. . . . It is told in Howard's best manner, with keen characterization, well-knit plot, excellent drama. . . . And our hero discovers, as many have discovered before, that no man can cast off his past life as he discards an old garment. At an inopportune moment it will rise to confound him.—E. B.

Easy MONEY Men

A Realistic Novelette

By ERIC HOWARD

THIS story must be, in the very nature of things, something of a confession. It begins with the success of my play, "Ladies of the Night"—which was the producers' title, not my own. Heaven forbid! The changed title, and what else the producers did to my play, made it successful. I was lucky enough to ride with them in that success.

But the story, after all, doesn't begin there. It begins long before that. And that's where the confession comes in. I dislike confessions, but in this case I see no other way of justifying myself. The circumstances, as you will see, were a bit unusual.

When I was very much younger than I am now, a series of events occurred that caused me to look at life through dark-colored glasses. Pessimism, I suppose, is a more or less natural counterpart of youth's ebullience. But in my case there was very little gaiety of spirits and a great deal of sadness. The result, at eighteen, was disastrous.

In the first place, I left the home of my uncle, who was also my guardian, in a fit of what I still consider righteous anger. I am old enough now to shrug and smile at it. But then I was furious. My uncle was an avaricious, miserly man, a religious hypocrite, and not at all the sort of person who should have been made the guardian of my father's son. For my father was totally unlike my uncle, and I greatly resembled him.

I was alone in the world, except for my uncle and my aunt. The latter was always very kind to me, except in her husband's presence. She was too timid to fight against his callous, dominating strength. On the death of my father, when I was fourteen, my mother having been dead for some years, Uncle John became my guardian. He was also given control of my father's estate, the value of which was about twenty thousand dollars. He exercised that control so carefully that I received nothing, during the four years I lived in his house, beyond the barest necessities of life. I was poorly clad, poorly fed, except for the food Aunt Mary smuggled to me, and, I still think, badly treated.

I was graduated from the local high school just before my eighteenth birthday. I had hoped to go to college. But during my school-days my uncle's stinginess had made life almost intolerable. My friends were always entertaining me, asking me to share their little pleasures, and so forth. Having no pocket money, hav-

ing to fight hard even for money with which to buy text-books, I could never return these favors. At that age a boy is apt to be high-spirited and proud. I deeply resented the fact that I was not given an allowance, however small. But my uncle would neither give me pocket money, from my father's estate, nor would he permit me to work. He was a rather important man in the town, and to have his nephew working would be a blow to his dignity.

Knowing that the same condition would continue if I went to college, I resolved not to go. My uncle was equally resolved that I should go. But I had made up my mind. On my eighteenth birthday, therefore, when my aunt gave me twenty dollars from her own secret savings, I bought a ticket to New York. The cost of the ticket was less than ten dollars. With the remainder of my money, I hoped to live until I could secure a job. When I had established myself, I decided that I would go to a well-known lawyer and consult him about my father's estate. At twenty-one it would be rightfully mine, but until I reached that age I could expect nothing from my uncle.

My clothing, as I have said, was of poor quality. No doubt I looked very much like a young hick, frightfully green. But I wasn't, exactly. I had read a great deal, and I was very observant. Also, I had been told often that I looked several years older than I was. No doubt life in my uncle's house had given me a certain air of maturity. On the train, thinking things over, I decided that I would give my age as twenty-one. This would help me in getting a job, I thought, at better wages than I could otherwise get.

The train butcher, from whom I bought a bar of chocolate for lunch, picked me as a green one right away. He tried to short-change me, but I caught him at it and caused him considerable embarrassment, to the amusement of my fellow-passengers.

WHEN I arrived at Grand Central station, I checked my bag, containing a few shirts and ties and socks, and started to walk across town. I had picked up the want-ad section of a New York paper and had glanced down the rooming-house ads. I had decided to live somewhere in the West Forties or Fifties, for I had already decided to become somehow connected with the theatre. Besides, theatrical rooming-houses were famous for their cheapness.

I had been to the city twice before, with my father, who had taken me to many shows, bought me everything I saw, and entertained me in great style. Then we had stopped at an excellent hotel. My father was one to do things in style. He was a gay, laughing, somewhat irresponsible man, but everybody liked him. He was my ideal. I have seen him give a dollar to a half-drunk beggar, and when some one protested that the man was undeserving, he called him back and gave him another dollar.

"Poor devil!" he said. "If he's undeserving, that makes it all the worse."

"But he'll only spend it for drink!" protested his companion.

"Maybe not," said my father. "Maybe the shock of finding someone generous enough to help him, in his condition, will sober him up and keep him sober."

My uncle called him irresponsible. But I know how utterly reliable he could be. When my mother was ill, for weeks and weeks he went without sleep, fighting for her life at her side. And once, when I broke my arm, he canceled important business engagements to be with me, to play with me. He cared nothing about money, for he made it easily. He was always doing things for other people.

Thinking of him, and of our visits to New York together, I walked west on Forty-second Street to Broadway. I paused before every theatre, considering my chances of employment there. I noticed that some of the well-dressed folk looked at my clothes. They were certainly out of place.

Turning down one of the Forties, in the direction of an advertised rooming-house, I saw a little tailor's shop. In the window were many unclaimed suits, offered for sale. I went in and looked them over.

After much dickering, I managed to buy a tailor-made tweed suit, that fitted me well, for six dollars. It was far from new, but it was made of excellent stuff and well-tailored. For another dollar the tailor threw in a cloth hat that went well with the suit. The clothing had been left by some temporarily broke actor who had been unable to pay the charges on it. I changed in the shop and sold the tailor my own outfit, after much argument, for one dollar. When I left him I carried myself with quite an air. The clothes did make a difference.

I am sure they made a difference to Mrs. Higgins, who conducted the rooming-house. She showed me her best rooms, which I could not afford, and I had to insist that I wanted something cheap. She led me, then, to the third-floor-back and I paid her one week's rent. I was supremely confident that my few remaining dollars would carry me over until I had found a job.

In that, I was lucky. One of the men in the house was the head usher at a theatre. I fell into conversation with him, and he gave me a job. It didn't pay much, but it was of the theatre, and it gave me much free time, nearly all of which I spent in the public library, reading plays and books about plays.

I WAS lucky, too, when I met Moira Moore—the loveliest girl I had ever seen. She was just eighteen, and she came of a theatrical family. She had been on the stage since childhood, and, like myself, her parents were dead. She was having quite a struggle and existed, at this time, through Mrs. Higgins' generosity. I think I fell in love with Moira at first sight. Whenever I could scrape a few dollars together, out of my earnings, I took her to dinner. Moira liked me, too, and we had many good times together, dreaming of the success that would come to us.

At about the same time, through Marshall, the head usher, with whom I often ate at the little off-Broadway places, I fell in with a set of hangers-on of the theatre. Some of them sometimes acted, as a pretense of respectable activity; but most of them did nothing. Yet they seemed invariably prosperous.

"How do these fellows get by?" I asked Marshall.

"Oh, some of 'em are dips," he said. "And some confidence men, or card sharps. Sort of genteel crooks—the Broadway kind."

I had always thought of crooks as ugly fellows with villainous faces, wearing masks and hats pulled over their eyes. These men that I met with Marshall were not like that. If they were not handsome, they did not look especially disreputable. Once in a while I would hear that one of them had been arrested and sent up. But that did not happen often.

One of these men I took a liking to at once, because, superficially, he reminded me of my father. He was a happy, genial sort, and I saw him lend money to those less fortunate, with no hope of getting it back. His name, so he said, was Dan Blythe. I don't think that was his real name.

With Dan and some of the others, I met all sorts of Broadway people—the man who had married a wealthy widow twice his age and had been put out of her house by her clever lawyers, the woman who owned a famous gambling den, a man who controlled a number of opium joints frequented by the elite of drug users, and so on. I was, I suppose, thrilled by meeting them; there was a certain glamour about them, and it was my first glimpse of that sort of life. I was very careful, though, that Moira should not meet them. I never took her to the places they frequented.

Before long I had been accepted by Dan as a friend. I learned that he was a confidence man, at the top of his game. He had dabbled in counterfeiting and he had smuggled jewels into America. But he preferred the confidence game, and played it shrewdly.

About this time Moira caught a severe cold. She had just got an engagement, the first in a long time, that promised to be the beginning of a real success. But her cold became worse—Mrs. Higgins' establishment was not properly heated or ventilated—and developed into pneumonia.

Dan Blythe had given me a hundred dollars for playing an apparently innocent part in one of his schemes, and, when Moira fell ill, I used this to engage a doctor and a nurse. But I could see that she was in for a long sickness. Some one else got her part in the new play, and Moira was alone and helpless. I talked to Dan about her.

Always generous, he offered to see that all her expenses were paid and that she was given the best of care. I could consider it a loan, and repay him any time in the future.

I had told him little about myself until then. But at this time I burst out with some protest at my uncle's greediness and made some reference to my father's estate. At Dan's questions, I told him the whole story, even admitting my true age.

"It's up to us, my boy," he said at the conclusion, "to collect from Uncle John."

"If I only could!" I cried.

My association with those who lived by theft had worked a change in my ethical code, a change of which I had hardly been aware, so subtly had it come about. And, besides, I thought, it is my money, not Uncle John's.

Dan began to plan. I saw, then, the inside workings of a clever confidence man's mind. He was to go

to the town from which I had fled, representing himself to be a large factory man from New York. He would negotiate with my uncle for the purchase of some land he owned, offering him a thousand dollars for an option. The land was being held, as I knew, at twice its value, and my uncle would be pleased to think that he was getting the better of this large manufacturer.

"When he gets the notion that he's playing me for a sucker," said Dan, "I'll sink the old harpoon into him!"

The plan, of course, was the simple, old and almost surefire one. Dan Blythe, the great manufacturer, would put up one thousand dollars for the option, agreeing to pay much more than the land was worth. But he would insist that he ought to have local backing, so that he would be insured of the community's loyalty to the enterprise. He would pay fifty thousand dollars for the land if twenty thousand were invested in his factory by my uncle or some other local people. Otherwise, he would select a factory site in a more hospitable community. Take it or leave it!

I could just see my uncle snatching at the chance. The firm Dan was supposed to represent was a large and well-known one. The thousand dollars in cash would establish him as a man of affairs. My uncle would discover, after buying twenty thousand dollars worth of utterly worthless stock, which Dan had printed for the purpose, that he had lost exactly nineteen thousand on the deal. And the large company would know no one who answered to Dan Blythe's description.

That was the scheme. I went into it all the way, giving Dan every bit of help I could. I was to receive half of what he got, more than a fair share, considering that he did all of the work.

"Hasn't your uncle tried to locate you?" Dan asked, during our conferences.

"Not that I know of. Perhaps he did. But I left a note saying that I was going West. If he tried to find me, it has probably been out there."

I AM making no excuses for myself. But I do think that it is fair to consider the circumstances—Moira's illness, my uncle's treatment of me, and Dan's kindness. The little struggle that my conscience put up didn't amount to much.

And it amounted to still less when the doctor reported to me that Moira was tubercular. That meant that she required a change of climate, freedom from worry, and the right sort of care.

"Dan!" I cried as soon as I could find him. "Get that harpoon ready, and sink it quick!"

Dan did. He was gone from New York only ten days. When he came back, he brought our spoils. Uncle John had been easy pickings.

With my share, I put Moira on the overland limited, in charge of a nurse, with a ticket for Arizona. I hated to see her go, I wanted to go with her, and I felt that I should never see her again. The money I was able to give her would take care of her until she regained her health. I told her it was from my father's estate.

"I've got to stay here and work, Moira," I told her. "But when you're well, and I've made a success, then, Moira dear—"

She clung to me like a frightened child. But just before the train left, she brightened for a moment and became her courageous self.

"I'll get well—for your sake," she promised me.

With Moira gone, my best friend was Dan Blythe. I was with him a good deal, and with his friends. I guess I developed a sort of Robin Hood complex—the idea of robbing the rich to help the poor. Our success in the case of my uncle inspired me to further efforts. Dan

and I did nothing very bad, as I see it—I mean by that, we didn't rob any widows or orphans, and, so far as I know, we didn't cause anybody real pain or sorrow—but we did acquire easy money my matching our wits with others. Our best bets were the canny, the shrewd and the greedy. It's amazing how easy it is to trim a man who prides himself on being a cautious business man.

The years passed. Letters from Moira came regularly. Slowly she regained her health. She could never forget what I had done for her. When she was well enough, she was going back to the stage, to earn enough to repay me.

Meanwhile, I attempted to write plays. Those first efforts—how callow and silly they seem now! I was known as a would-be playwright. Dan saw to it that I was very little known as a confidence man. But I was one of the Broadway tribe, playing the easy money game, drifting.

My aunt had died, and my uncle had lost his fortune, including my own, through unwise investments. I got nothing from the estate except what Dan had helped me to get.

"See?" said Dan. "You've got to collect yours in this world, or it ain't collected. Lucky we went after that when we did, before the old boy bought that oil stock."

I suppose I could have prosecuted Uncle John for his misuse of my money. But I didn't care to bother with it. I had plenty, now, and, besides, some of my own activity might come to light in a court-room. I had the criminal's regard for courts and officers of the law.

Moira, confident that she had regained her health, returned to the stage, going into stock in San Francisco. I advised her against it, and, after two months in the foggy western city, she suffered a relapse and was forced to return to the desert. I would have gone to her then, but I was still eager to have a success to show her before I saw her again.

Finally, the Epsteins took my play. They changed it beyond recognition before they put it on, but it went over. It was a success from the start, and my royalties began to pour in. This, I discovered, was even easier money than the confidence game. Then and there, I quit that profession. Dan would have made me quit, anyway.

The Epsteins sold the film rights to my play to one of the biggest producers, who thereupon offered me a contract to write photoplays for him. I signed it and prepared to leave for Hollywood. I was sick of Broadway and the life I had been leading.

Being able to afford a servant, I took with me an ex-dip and forger by the name of Pinky Parsons. Pinky had suffered a paralytic stroke that made him incompetent in his graft and he was loyal beyond question. Before his criminal career had started, he had been a valet.

On the way to California, I stopped off for a day with Moira. This time she was truly recovering. And I thought that she was lovelier than ever. She was happier than I was over my success. Before I asked her to marry me, as I did presently, I told her what I had been doing. If I had anticipated the look of pain that crossed her face, I should not have told her. Yet I am glad that I did.

"Never again, Jimmy?" she asked. "You'll never again do such things—even for my sake? Promise me!"

I promised her solemnly. She agreed to marry me, just as soon as her doctors pronounced her cured.

"And if that does not happen, dearest," she said, "I shall not marry you, but I'll love you always."

"Don't fear! You'll be well in a month!" I assured her. "And then I'll come back for you!"

II

THESE motion picture companies do things very well—except, as some one has cynically remarked, for making pictures. I was received as a celebrity and I became a guest of the producer himself. The company had located a charming house for me, high on a Beverly hill, and had leased it furnished. There, after a few days in the producer's home, I was installed with Pinky, a Japanese cook, and a chauffeur. One of the company's cars was placed at my disposal until I should select one for myself.

The homes of the wealthy, film stars and others, surrounded us. My house was not large or palatial, but it was a beautiful bit of Spanish architecture, and quite all that a playwright could want. I was happy in it, and I knew that Moira would love it.

"Say," said Pinky one morning at breakfast, "Dan had just oughta see the money there is here! Boy, wouldn't he gather in some, though! I'll say! But here's a funny one. You know that old guy that lives next door—the one I thought was a director maybe, 'cause he don't look like an actor?"

"Yes," I nodded. "What about him?"

"He's a lawyer," said Pinky. "And he used to be chief of police of Los Angeles. He was a devil at it, too, they say. He sent more men up than anybody—Say, ain't it funny—me livin' next door to a chief of police?"

And Pinky gave his little laugh, out of the corner of his mouth.

"I'll bet a guy like that has a lot o' enemies," he went on. "He was sure hard when he was chief. I've heard about him, all over the country. Some bird that he got sent up for a long stretch in the 'stir' is gonna come out some day and pot him just for luck. I'll bet he don't sleep too easy. Huh?"

"I didn't say anything, Pinky."

"Well, why don't you?" he asked, with the freedom of one who had known me "when." I did not mind, for Pinky, in the presence of others, was the perfect valet.

"There's nothing to say," I told him.

"Ain't there?" he demanded. "Say, I'd just as soon you moved out of here and took another shack. Just s'pose something happened to that old guy, ex-chief Farley. Just s'pose! Where would we be at? Maybe some wise dick would get a line on me, see? Or on you. They never did get anything on you, 'cause Dan watched your hand like a daddy. But don't rest too easy. The New York dicks knew you was in the easy money, kid. Don't fool yourself. Now just s'pose, for the sake of argument, that something happens to Farley. We're here, see? Right next door. There's gonna be a investigation. And where do we get off at? Huh?"

"Nonsense!" said I. "You're talking through your brown derby, Pinky. You forget that I'm an eminent playwright and scenarist. And you're my servant. Stow your worries."

"Just the same, I don't like it, kid!"

"You've got the worry habit, Pinky. This is California, the land of the care-free. Eat, drink and be merry. And don't worry about an ex-chief of police."

I had to be at the studio rather early that day. I left Pinky still protesting, and was driven in the company's big car to the studio gates. There I went into conference with the star, her director and a continuity writer.

The star was a magnificent woman in her thirties. On the screen, doubtless, she looked younger. She had a certain free and easy charm, and she reminded me of the woman who ran the gambling den. I had known several

like her, in fact. And presently, in her speech, I detected a use of words that signified familiarity with the underworld. Dan and I always fought shy of such earmarks, except in the company of our fellow-swindlers.

This woman, I thought, had been "one of us." She had been a grifter.

Even after my years on Broadway, I still retained an air of youthfulness. It had helped me to put over one or two of our easy money schemes.

"You are so very young!" said the star when I was introduced. "I had no idea—A mere boy, in fact!"

And she laughed, as if my youth were a great joke.

"I understand that youth is what they want in this business," I said. The director, a fat boyish-looking fellow, chuckled at that.

"Yes," nodded Mona de la Monte, "that is true. But how can one so young know so much about—well, the wicked ways of the world?"

"I invented some of them," I smiled, in the manner of a Broadway wise-cracker.

IT was a little later that the continuity writer, a tall blond innocent who should have been out playing golf, made a suggestion as to how one of my characters should rob a safe in the film version. It was so unlike the real peterman's method, and so unreal, that I let out a protest. "Rats!" I said. "If you have to have the safe robbed, I'll show you how to do it. But for heaven's sake, don't thrust any more of that Jimmy Valentine bunk down the public throat. The real ways are just as dramatic."

"Did you ever rob a safe?" asked Mona, tantalizingly.

"Nothing so crude," I laughed. "No crib-cracking, no stick-up stuff, no badger game—nothing like that."

I said it lightly, but perhaps I placed a certain emphasis on "badger game." I had thought, when I first saw Mona, that she would be a bird at that graft. She flushed, reached for a cigarette, lighted it, and coolly blew the smoke in my direction. There was that same tantalizing smile in her eyes. It was a mark of comradeship. She, the film star, and I, the playwright, were linked by our former professions. The director and the continuity man, both "goofs," as we of Broadway should have called them, saw none of this. But Mona and I were *en rapport*.

By what stages she had reached stardom I did not know. Of course she was well qualified for the work. Her beauty was quite dazzling, in a rather hard, vampirical way. Perhaps, I thought, she badgered some producer into making a place for her. The opportunity once secured, she had easily won her public. I had read some publicity about her; she was supposed to be a Latin. She had been a dancer, well-known in Europe and South America. I doubted whether she had ever been out of the States. But that didn't matter.

Southern California, having attracted many people of wealth by reason of its climate and beauty, has also attracted those who prey on the wealthy. There are more clever criminals in this part of the country than anywhere else—mostly confidence men of one kind and another. Fake promoters, high-pressure salesmen of worthless stock, religious and medical quacks, each with a wealthy following, and so forth. It's a lucrative field.

AFTER our conference, Mona backing up all of my suggestions, she asked me to lunch with her in her dressing-bungalow. Her pseudo-French maid served us, and I detected in the maid, as in Mona, the characteristics of one who knew a good deal about certain phases of life.

"I'm glad you're assigned to my company," said Mona. "I like you. We should be good pals."

"I hope so," said I, politely.

"Say," said Mona, "whatever happened to Big Dick Harrison? The last I heard, they were trying to extradite him from Canada. Did they get him?"

"Yes," I nodded. "They tricked him into crossing over the Maine line. Dick's in Atlanta. It's been kept pretty dark."

"Hell!" she murmured. "I liked Dick. He was a real man. I wonder if I can do anything for him."

"He got five years," I told her. "With good behavior and credits, he'll be out in a short while."

The man she mentioned was the so-called king of counterfeiters. Dan Blythe had known him well; I had met him once. He stood high in crookdom. He had perfected an organization that had branches in every sizable city. At a certain time all of these branches started "showing the queer." Dick received half of what was taken in; the rest was kept by the branch. It was such a wholesale scheme that, for a while, it was in a fair way to upset the whole United States currency. The Secret Service was confused by the widespread activity. Then one man was caught and squealed. But Dick's organization was such that one man could only implicate one other; he had borrowed this plan from a Red labor union that flourished before the war. As a result of his cleverness in this regard, he was not seriously implicated. Sure as the Secret Service was of his guilt, the jury was inclined to doubt the magnitude of his alleged crime. Finally, he was given five years for a lesser offense. It was rumored that Dick had salted away a large fortune.

"It was here that they first caught him," said Mona. "He came here to see me. Farley, who used to be chief, nabbed him. Dick got away, by forfeiting his bond, and went to Canada. I'll bet Farley had something to do with catching him there. He's a bloodhound."

"So I've heard," said I. "I haven't met him, although my house is next door to his!"

"I wonder if they'll let Dick go; when he gets out. Or will they nab him on another charge?"

"I don't know. If he shows that he has money, they'll try to get him, of course."

"I'm scheduled for a personal appearance tour," said Mona, frowning thoughtfully. "And I'm going to Atlanta! They'll let a picture star in anywhere—one nice thing about this game. I'll get to see Dick. And if I can help it, there'll be no charge against him when he gets out. Will you help me?"

"Why—why, I don't know what I can do," I hesitated, remembering Moira. "I'm absolutely out of it now, Mona. Play-writing for me. And I'm going to be married next month."

"Good for you! I didn't mean that I wanted you to get involved in anything. But you're the only man I know that knows anything—about this kind of thing. I'll need your advice and your friendship."

"Of course!" I nodded.

"Good boy!" Again she gave me that tantalizing smile. "You know they call me a vamp. Aren't you a bit afraid of me?"

"Not a bit, Mona," I laughed. "You can be a sister to me if you like, but that's all."

WOMEN of her type, wise in the ways of the world, accustomed to having men at their feet, are very quick to recognize disinterested friendship. When they know that they do not have to "play" a man, they can put aside their cultivated feminine wiles and be genuine and sincere.

In my own little office at the studio, where a stenog-

rapher chewed gum and read a late best-seller, awaiting my whim as to dictation, I found a letter.

It was from Dan Blythe. He wrote:

Dear Kid: My brother Joe is in Dutch in Frisco. Time for me to be leaving the Big Town, anyway, and I'm hurrying out to him. He's been on the square for a long time. I think they've framed him. Anyway, I'll see what I can do. Afterwards, I'll run down to see you. Let me know—at the Frisco address below—if there's any reason why I shouldn't come. They don't know me there. Good luck.

I borrowed my stenographer's machine, and wrote him at once. I told him to come right on, that I'd be delighted to see him and that I could put him up.

Then, an idea for a story having occurred to me while at lunch with Mona, I dictated a rough outline of it to the girl. She, obviously, didn't like it half as well as she did the best-seller. I took the outline and went home to think it over.

Pinky met me at the door.

"Say," he said, "I've been keepin' my eyes open. And there's been a funny old gink that looks like a hick walkin' up and down here. He stopped and sized up this joint aplenty. Seemed like the place he was lookin' for, all right. An' I didn't like his looks. Say, I'd just as soon you'd move away from next door to the ex-chief."

"Pinky, you give me a pain! Supposing an old gink *does* give the house the once-over. Maybe he likes its looks. Stow your worries. I'm busy now, and I don't want to be disturbed."

"Yes, sir!" said Pinky, the perfect valet. "Would you like tea, sir?"

"Hell, no! Did I ever drink tea? Make me a pot of coffee!"

I retired to my study to think out the details of my scenario.

III

MONA left a few days later, to be gone for several weeks, on her personal appearance tour. She went directly to Atlanta, and in a note to me she wrote that she had seen Dick and that they had planned for the future. As soon as she returned, the production of my play was to begin. Meanwhile, the continuity writer and the director and myself were busy with the adaptation. I knew little about the work, and my days were full.

Another letter from Dan Blythe assured me that he would be able to get his brother off, and that he would then visit me.

Moira was almost cured, her doctors told her. In a month or six weeks I could go to claim her and she would be able to live in California, if she avoided the sea-shore. Beverly Hills is high and dry.

Once or twice Pinky repeated his suggestion that I move. But I was so enamored of the house, and so wanted Moira to live in it, that I ignored his suggestion. He had again seen the "funny old gink" passing the place and looking it over. Several times I had passed ex-chief Farley with a neighborly nod, which he returned, and I believe my chauffeur had borrowed tools from his man. Farley was a grim, hard-faced man; from his appearance I could easily believe that he had been a human blood-hound so far as evil-doers were concerned. I heard that he had become chief of police, temporarily giving up his profitable law practice, purely out of a desire to put a stop to crime. He had nearly succeeded, but as soon as he resigned and another man took his place, the department had lapsed again to its state of inefficiency. It was too small to cope with conditions in the fast-growing, far-spreading

city. Driven by Farley, it had accomplished miracles. Without him, law-breakers waxed fat. I heard, too, that he had resigned as the result of a political quarrel. I wondered what his thoughts and feelings were.

My work kept me from thinking of these things. I was perhaps lulled into a sense of security. I put out of my mind all thought of my former career; it was as if those hectic Broadway nights had never been.

It was several weeks before Dan Blythe turned up. I found him at home when I got there late one afternoon. Mona had arrived the same day, but we had had no time to talk at the studio. She promised to come to my house that evening.

"Hello, kid," Dan seized my hand. "How goes it?" "Fine," I said. And I told him of my work at the studio. "And how about you?"

"So-so," he answered. "I'm all right, but I've had some job getting Joe off. I got him freed on one count, but they may nab him again any time. He's been absolutely straight for over a year, but somebody wants him. I've been talking with Pinky. He's been telling me about Farley, your neighbor."

"Oh, Pinky's balmy on that subject!" I said. "Farley's all right. He isn't chief any more."

"LISTEN!" said Dan. "I learned a few things in Frisco. A big new detective agency has been established—as big as Pinkerton's. It's a funny thing, too—they go after anybody at all, whether they're hired to do so or not. I understand they've got all kinds of backing and their purpose is to round up every crook in California. They don't seem to operate outside the state yet, but they've certainly got the dope on outsiders. They know all about me, for instance. Told Joe about me, in detail; every job I've been on, nearly. Of course they'd have a hard time getting enough evidence to convict, but they know me. They know I'm here. Just let me try anything here, and they'll nab me. I don't doubt but that they know you, too, from your association with me. As near as I can estimate, they know all of us. And your neighbor, Farley, is the man at the head of it!"

"What!" I cried. "Yes," nodded Dan. "I had some job finding that out. But I learned it, and I'm right. When he quit as chief, on account of politics, he organized this thing. Got a lot of business men to back him. They intend to stamp out swindles, because it's giving the place a bad name and interrupting the flow of tourists' gold into their own coffers, see? Farley's the man at the helm. As I say, they know everybody—and all about 'em. As soon as a crook crosses the state line, they're after him. They don't bother much with the small-fry; they want us big boys that take the sucker money."

"Then Pinky's hunch was right," I said. "I should have moved."

"Maybe not. Maybe you're better off right here, under Farley's nose. Now that you're wise, you can watch him. I didn't know he lived next door, or I wouldn't have come here. I'll get out. I'll be at a hotel—let you know which one in the morning."

"But, Dan!" I protested, as he rose. "You can stay here. If you don't pull anything, what can they do?"

"I don't want to get you in bad, kid."

"I'll take a chance," said I. "Stay here. Listen! Mona de la Monte, one of our stars, is coming over tonight. She's a friend of Big Dick Harrison. She saw him in Atlanta. He's due to get out soon, and—"

"He got out about a week ago," said Dan. "I heard it in Frisco. They—Farley and his pack of hounds—know all about Big Dick too. Farley got him before, remember? He's going to get him again, if he can.

Dick had better watch his step. Who's the girl—his moll?"

"She's crazy about him, yes. You wait until she comes. I want you here when she talks about Dick. If he got out last week he may be in town now. I told Mona I'd advise her if I could."

"Lay off!" cautioned Dan. "You've got to cut clean, or they'll get you mixed in. That's why I'm beating it. You think about Moira."

"I am," I said. "But I'm not going to let you leave now. You're staying for dinner. And I may need you when Mona comes. I'm out of the graft, for always, but I'm not going to throw down a friend like you. Did Pinky tell you about the old chap he's seen around here?"

"Yes. Probably one of their men. May have been shadowing you."

"That would be a dull job, all right," I laughed.

The Japanese announced dinner then, and Dan and I went in. Neither of us ate as heartily as was our custom.

AS we were sipping our coffee, Mona came. She kissed me on the cheek, catching me unexpectedly, and murmured "Greetings, brother!" with her usual smile. Then, seeing Dan, she nodded cordially.

"I haven't met you," she said. "But I know you. Dick has told me about you. You're Dan Blythe."

"And I'm damned if you aren't Mary Blake!" said Dan, staring at her. "The 'within-the-law' baby! I always wondered where you went. The nerve of you! A picture star, with your photograph everywhere!"

"Sure," smiled Mona. "But my photographs now don't look like the ugly snaps the papers published when I disappeared. When they got Dick, I was out here, trying to break into pictures. You know when I left New York. Finally, I did break in. I went to Tahiti with a company. While I was gone they sent Dick to Atlanta. I was out of touch with everybody, and I hadn't been able to find him until Jimmy Leighton here turned up."

"How'd you know I was—?" I began.

Mona smiled. "Because you spotted me, brother. But, honest, you got me wrong. I never did the badger game, except once, and that time I had to. Well, Dick's here!" she said. "He's coming up here in an hour."

"Hell!" cried Dan. "He can't come to this house. Lord, I've just been telling Jimmy—"

Pinky burst into the room, very much excited. But at sight of Mona he composed his features and said, in the colorless tone of a valet: "I've just seen that old man, sir, going into Farley's."

"Very well," said I. "Let me know when he comes out." And I dismissed him with a wave of my hand.

Dan hastened to explain to Mona what he had learned about Farley's organization.

"It's dangerous for Dick to come here," he said. "Dangerous for all of us. If Farley knows he has money salted away—"

"We've arranged that," said Mona. "We're to be married at once. Then it will be announced that my salary has been greatly increased. It won't be, for my contract has some time to run. But the supposed increase will cover the money that I shall bank each week—Dick's money."

"But don't you see?" demanded Dan. "It's tonight I'm thinking about. Dick comes here, I'm here, Pinky's here, you're here, Jimmy's here—suppose Farley knows all about us? What will he do?"

"What *can* he do?" I countered. "Dick's free, Mona is not wanted; and you and I are not wanted here. The best thing to do is to stay right here and sit tight.

Mona's a well-known person, and I'm respectable enough. Farley can't do a thing!"

"I don't like it," Dan shook his head. "This Farley organization is a big thing, and a hard thing to buck."

"We're not bucking it," I protested. "We're as innocent as an orphan asylum. Sit tight!"

"There's no way of reaching Dick now," said Mona. "He's coming here. It wouldn't do for him to turn round and flee. No, we'll have to sit tight. I'll never forgive myself if this puts you in bad, Jimmy—"

"Forget it!" I said. "Farley won't trouble any of us."

And I felt sure that he would not. I had become so thoroughly the respectable playwright that my old fear of the police had left me. I was all for law and order.

Pinky came into the room again.

"That old man is making a long call at Farley's," he said.

"Yes, isn't he? A gentleman is calling soon. The name is Harrison. When he comes, show him in here."

From his eyes I knew that Pinky knew it was Big Dick. But no expression crossed his face.

"Very good, sir," he said.

IV

DICK came at the appointed time. He was happy to see Dan. They had been pals in what are referred to as "the good old days," when everything seems to have been much better than it is now. When Dan told him of Farley's organization, Dick said that he had heard of it but had no idea of its scope.

"Well," said Dan, morosely, "I think our games are cooked in this fair state. From what I know—especially what I got next to in my brother's case—any of us that turns around and so much as looks crooked will get nabbed."

"I should worry!" observed Dick. "I intend to quit, anyway. Mona and I are getting tied up tomorrow. We've got enough—I mean, her salary is enough for both of us." He winked slyly.

"Watch your step!" cautioned Dan. "Farley has ways of finding out just what they pay her. If she banks more than that, look out!"

"Dick," said Mona quickly, "perhaps we'd better not! Let's not risk it. My salary is enough for us, really it is."

"What breed of dog do you think I am?" demanded Dick. "Your salary's yours. This other money is ours."

Our general discussion of whys and wherefores, ways and means, went on for some time. Dan agreed to help Dick devise some way of using the money he had concealed at the time of his arrest. They agreed that they could put over some plan that would hold water.

"If we can't," observed Dan, "we'd better retire. I've beat better men than Farley in my day, and so have you!"

Pinky again stepped into the room. This time he was very far from the perfect servant.

"Say!" he cried. "That old gink is comin' here—with Farley! And I saw a bunch of men over at Farley's. I think they're surroundin' the joint."

Everybody, for an instant, looked frightened.

As host, I felt that it was up to me to take charge.

"All right!" I said. "Sit tight. He can't do a thing. Let me talk to him. Let him in, Pinky, if he asks for me. I'll talk to him out there." I indicated the hallway.

Presently the bell rang, and Pinky answered it. Farley and the other man were there. Farley asked to be let in; he wanted to see me. I stepped into the hall.

And then, instantly, I completely lost my self-assurance and my poise. The old man beside Farley was my Uncle John!

"I'VE got you, you thief!" he cried, as he saw me.

"Hold your tongue!" snapped Farley, whipping out a police pistol. "Now, young man, I want to see your guests, too."

I hadn't even the calm left to demand that he produce a warrant. I let him force me back into my living-room and into the presence of my guests.

As soon as we stood before them, my uncle pointed out Dan Blythe.

"There he is! There he is!" he shrieked. "That's the man that robbed me, with my ungrateful nephew's help! That's the man!"

Dan was as surprised as I was by my uncle's appearance. So much water had flowed beneath the bridge since we had collected from Uncle John, that he did not at first recognize him. When he did he rose to his feet.

"This man says you swindled him, Blythe!" snapped Farley. "You and his nephew! What have you to say for yourself?"

"I don't know what he's talking about," replied Dan. "As a matter of fact, chief, I think the old fellow's out of his head. This is really what happened. This boy's father left him an estate worth about twenty thousand dollars. His uncle, there, who says I swindled him, was his guardian and executor of the estate. He misappropriated the funds and invested in worthless oil stock. When Mr. Leighton here—Mr. Leighton's the well-known playwright, chief—found that out he could have prosecuted his uncle. But he didn't. He let him go, out of pure kindness of his heart. And now the old fellow accuses the boy and myself of swindling him! He really must be out of his head. He's the swindler! Mr. Leighton has ample proof of that."

Farley looked from one to another of us, evidently somewhat impressed by Dan's words. He silenced my uncle roughly. He turned to me.

"What have you to say?" he asked.

"Mr. Blythe has stated the case exactly," I said. "My uncle robbed me of my estate. By his ill-treatment he compelled me to leave his home. Then he lost my money in his stupid investments. When I was twenty-one, I engaged lawyers to look into it for me. I found out what had happened, and, rather than prosecute him, I let it drop."

"You robbed me!" squealed my uncle, thrusting a bony finger at Dan. "You got me to invest in your factory! Twenty thousand dollars! You robbed me!"

"Do you deny what these men say?" demanded Farley sternly. "Did you or did you not defraud this boy of his estate? Answer me!"

Uncle John had never possessed a surplus of courage. He cowered now.

"What do you mean," went on Farley, "coming to me to tell me this story when you stole this boy's money? Mr. Leighton says his lawyer's have proof that you misappropriated his money! That's embezzlement! Do you hear that—embezzlement!"

"I lost his money, yes," nodded my uncle dully. "But I didn't steal it. I lost it through an investment. I was only trying to increase it for him. But that man—" pointing again at Dan—"that man sold me stock in his factory."

"I never had a factory," said Dan amiably.

"I know you hadn't," answered my uncle. "But you sold me stock in it. The stock was worthless! You swindler!"

"Keep still!" Farley thrust him aside. "I'll settle with you later. I'll have you understand that I don't trap crooks for other crooks. I think Blythe and Leighton are telling the truth, about you, if not about themselves. If they robbed you, I think they got only what

they deserved. I'm here on other business. Harrison, you're under arrest!"

Mona cried out, but Farley ignored her. Dick looked calmly into the ex-chief's eyes.

"You're bound to dog me, aren't you?" he asked insolently. "What's it for now—traffic violation?"

"There are several charges remaining against you. You should not have come back to California, Harrison. You knew I'd get you."

"But those charges—Why, there isn't a serious one among 'em. And you know as well as I do that you can't get evidence enough to convict. No jury is going to send me away again, after I've done this stretch."

"No?" said Farley. "As to that, we'll see. At your trial, you may remember, you stated under oath that you had no money except what you were known to have in one bank account."

"Well?" asked Dick.

"Well, I've found where you hid the rest!" snapped Farley. "And Jones has confessed."

AT those words, Harrison visibly wilted. For a bit there was a tense silence, during which no one moved. We all realized, I think, that Dick was indeed caught. I glanced at Mona; certainly her face was more tragic than in any moment of her pictures.

When I say no one moved, I forgot Uncle John. When I looked away from Mona, I saw that he had stepped behind Farley. In his upraised hand was a dagger that he had insanely stripped from the wall. In an instant he would have sunk the blade into Farley's back.

"You won't help me, eh?" he murmured madly. "Well, I'll—"

I could not have moved, by any act of will. Nor could Dan.

But I saw Dick Harrison, covered though he was by Farley's pistol, leap at Uncle John. Farley, thinking it an attack upon himself, fired. But Dick did not stop. He caught Uncle John's upraised hand and twisted the dagger from it. The knife fell to the floor. Farley, swinging round, saw this brief bit of action and realized that Dick had saved his life.

My uncle had been thrown against the wall by the force of Dick's weight. He remained there. And Dick, turning to face Farley, sank to his knees, with blood spurting from him.

Farley caught him in his arms.

"You saved my life!" he said, somewhat awed.

"S all right, chief!" Dick grinned weakly. "I forgot it was you he was after."

Then he lost consciousness, and Mona gathered him into her arms.

V

I COULD never have straightened out this tangle without Moira's help. She arrived early the next morning.

"Jimmy, dear," she cried as I caught her in my arms. "They told me I was absolutely well and I just couldn't wait to wire you to come, and so I came to you, and oh! I'm so happy to be here and what a wonderful house this is!"

Of course, I was delighted to see her—as gay and well as when I had first met her. But her arrival was rather unpropitious. I had to see Farley within a few minutes. Dick had been taken to a hospital the night before, Mona going along with him. I had put up Dan. And Farley had taken Uncle John home with him.

"If you'll promise me to do nothing at all until I've

talked with you," he had said, "I'll promise you the same."

On that we had shaken hands, and Farley had gone.

"Don't expect any decency from that old bird," Dan had commented. "He'd send up his own mother if he felt like it!"

And now, with Moira here, I would have to tell her all that had happened. I did, briefly and simply.

"I couldn't throw down my friends, Moira," I concluded, "even though I had quit the game."

"No," she promptly agreed. "No, that wouldn't be like you. All right, Jimmy, run along and talk to your Mr. Farley. I'll walk through your lovely garden."

She went outdoors with me, and walked at my side to the hedge that separated my place from the ex-chief's. At a gate there Farley met us.

And thus, unintentionally, Moira became the third member of our conference. Farley, having met her and having asked me if she knew what had happened, would not have it otherwise.

"Now," said the policeman, "I've had a report from the hospital. Harrison is not badly wounded, and he'll soon recover. I can't discount the fact that he saved my life and that I shot him while he was doing so. Your uncle is partly demented from his worries about money. He's been here for some time, and ever since you moved next door he's spied on you. When Blythe appeared he came to me and demanded that I arrest you both. I was more interested in Harrison."

"The man saved my life. But I can't take that into consideration, at all, unless he voluntarily restores the money that he stole. He's got to give it up. Perhaps he's been punished enough, but I swore never to let him get away with that money and I don't intend to!"

"And if he does give it up—you won't prosecute him?" I asked.

"How can I?" growled Farley. "He saved my life! And I'm pretty sure the police won't! They don't prosecute anybody any more!"

I led him on to a further discussion of the case. What did he mean to do with Dan, and Dan's brother, with my uncle and myself? If Dick gave up the money and attempted no new swindle, would he go free?

Farley countered with questions of his own. So shrewd was his cross-examination that, before I knew it, I had partly given myself away. I shrugged and told him my story, much as I have told it here. It was then that Moira broke in.

"But he did it for me!" she said. And she said much more—so eulogistic that I should blush to put it down.

"Well," said the old chief, slowly, and with the suggestion of a smile, "I think you're worth it."

"I'll see that my uncle is provided for," I said, "not because I have any love for him, but because he is my uncle."

"Good!" Farley nodded. "Very well, then. If Harrison surrenders the money, he'll go free, on the condition that he commits no crime in California. Your friend Blythe on the same condition, and likewise his brother—my San Francisco office was too zealous in that case, anyway. As for you, I place you in the custody of this young lady!"

And there I have happily remained.

Although Dick cursed when compelled to give up his ill-gotten gains, he was soon reconciled to it. Mona's salary was large enough for both. And, in the past, Dick had squandered thousands on her.

But Pinky will never outgrow his suspicion of Farley.

"I'd just as soon you'd move outa this shack," he often says. "Me, livin' next door to a chief of police! It ain't right!"

Here we have a surpassing burglar story, told with rare charm and keen insight, enriched with sympathetic understanding of human motives, animated with a flair for whimsical characterization. It's a story of compelling interest. A story that weaves a subtle spell. . . . The suave Pedro, full of wiles and stratagems, believed he had planned his grotesque crime with such careful regard for detail that nothing could ever harm him, but he reckoned without a strange event, an odd little quirk, that upset his plans completely.—E. B.

DAVY

The Story of a "Boy Burglar"

By J. PAUL SUTER

THE boy Davy hesitated at the liquid tinkle of water, but Pedro's suave voice cheerily urged him on.

"Only a brook, my gay ladrone! Running water, over which bad spirits cannot follow us. When we are around the corner of the hill, we shall have moonlight, instead of this blackness. Then things will seem as they are. So! Jump! Now you can see the corner of his house, in the moonlight."

The smell of spring was in the boy's nostrils; the warm, earthy tang of growing things. The ground beneath his feet felt warm and buoyant. To his country-bred senses, it told of plowing time. After that would come harrowing, seeding, the long tending of the crop, the harvest. It all came back to him within half-a-dozen steps after he and his tall companion had crossed the brook. It was far more real to him than the mad adventure in which he was joining with Pedro Alvarez.

Why was he joining? He had always been honest. Why had Pedro chosen a green country boy for a companion? Thinking did not come easily to Davy. The whole affair puzzled him. But Pedro allowed him short time for thought of what lay before him or for memories of the home he had run away from. The low, insinuating voice continued, smoothly:

"You have the revolver I lent you? And you remember that for this night you are to be clay in my hands? I will mold you. I will tell you what to do. You have looked for work, but vainly. Now you are to be instructed in a profession which has no dull seasons. No stern bosses, Davy. No employers to say, 'We are sorry, but you must be laid off a few months.' No one to tell you, when you apply for work, that there is no work. Are you not glad?"

The boy answered dully. He was clay, indeed, in the hands of this subtly masterful man, totally different from all Davy's conceptions of a professional burglar. Burglars, so the folks at home believed, were hard, rough men. Even now, he was sure most of them must be of that type. But Pedro's neatness in dress was almost foppish. Except for his artistically clipped black moustache, he shaved to the blood. Davy Siler had taken him at first for a doctor or a lawyer. The boy's confidence, never given half-way, had been unreservedly accorded him. Even that confidence, however, had been rudely jarred by the disclosure. Davy had trembled in the balance. But Pedro's smiling suavity, combined

with the bitter dearth of work, had weighted the scales.

"The old man lives alone out here, except for a servant. That makes this one an easy problem. I am starting you here because it is easy."

"Suppose the servant should be awake?" Davy demanded, sinking his voice to a whisper, though the white farmhouse they were coming to was dark.

"She is old and deaf, and she sleeps in the attic."

"But the old man, himself?"

Pedro nodded and laughed. They were still walking in the darkness, but now their way paralleled the moon-swept space, and they could see each other more clearly. "Well said, my ladrone! The old man, himself! That is the problem, surely. He is not a fool, this old jeweler Peck, even though he lives in the country. Though he brings rare jewels home at times, where they are far from safe, even so he is not a fool. We must be careful, I say, despite the fact that he was so unwise as to bring such a jewel home tonight!"

DAVY SILER'S curiosity was overcoming his natural diffidence. He wondered how his companion could be so sure that Peck had brought a jewel with him. When he put the question, however, Pedro chuckled with amusement.

"I am sure he brought a jewel, because I am a magician. I read the old man's mind, from a distance. That is how I can tell."

"Somebody in the store must have told you," the boy protested stubbornly.

Pedro laughed, though still with careful restraint.

"I wonder!" he retorted. He stopped, suddenly, and placed a hand—a grim, clutching hand—on the boy's shoulder. All the laughter was squeezed from his voice as he went on: "Listen to me! I have said the old man is not a fool. He may be sound asleep. With the help of a little chloroform he will remain asleep. If so, all is well. But if we find him awake—what then?"

"Where does he keep the diamond?" Davy Siler inquired sagely.

"A good question! He keeps it in a little wall safe in his bedroom. But he has no memory for figures, this Peck, so he writes both combinations—the safe here and the safe at the store—in a little notebook to carry in his pocket. I have those combinations."

The old query halted on Davy's lips—how did Pedro Alvarez know? He said, merely:

"If he's awake, we must chloroform him, anyway."

Pedro chuckled. "I thought you would say that. No, my little ladrone. All professions have their bad points. With the doctor, there is contagious disease. For the lawyer, cases which he would like to refuse. The undertaker must put up with ugly corpses, as well as the beautiful ones. With us, it is the chance that this old man identifies us. A chink of moonlight, an electric lantern at his bedside, so that he sees one of us before we send him to his dreams—and what then? Five, ten, twenty years, Judge Milmain gives us. No, my boy. This is the unpleasant side of our profession. If he wakes, he dies! One of us must shoot him. Whichever of us sees him first, and knows him to be awake, that one must shoot him."

Horried, the boy tried to shrink away; but the clutching hand held him fast.

"You don't like it? You have promised to be clay in my hands, and you flinch when I begin to mold you?"

"That would be murder!" The words came aridly from Davy's lips.

"Murder? And for murderers there is the noose—the little dance without a floor to dance on—that is it? Let me tell you something. You will go into the house with me—you will agree to that?"

The boy assented, with a half-sob which his companion was pleased to ignore.

"Then I have your promise. Now, tell me, if they prove that you went into the house, but killed nobody, what is the penalty?"

Davy hesitated. The question was beyond his legal knowledge, but he tried to guess at the answer. "The penitentiary—" he began; whereat the Spaniard laughed, scornfully.

"No! Did I say Milmain would give you five or ten years? I said that to keep you from being frightened. In this state, the penalty for entering an inhabited dwelling is death. When you are once in, you can kill or not, as you please. It makes no difference. If they catch you, and your lawyer's tears cannot melt the jury, it is all the same. Judge Milmain—damn his fat soul!—blinks at you and whispers: '... by the neck, until you are dead.' It is a whisper you do not forget. Now, what do you say?"

Again, Davy tried to pull away, but the inexorable mentor seemed to read his thoughts.

"You promised! You can not back out!"

THE boy writhed in his anguish of mind. He tried to hold firm. But the struggle was unequal. He was clay, indeed. The Spaniard, now suavely insinuating, now threatening and fierce, pounced on his every word and twisted it into an argument.

"You think Pedro Alvarez will let a traitor live? Look at this pistol! See its black muzzle! There is death for you if you will not keep your promise! But your *promise*—ah, my Davy boy, you will not try to break it. I know you will not. You are not so poor a sport as that. You will stand by your friend Pedro to the last, even if you are carried into danger!"

It ended with half-sobbed, half-spoken acquiescence from the boy, which seemed to satisfy Pedro. He became briskly alert. They would have to hurry. Already they had wasted too much time. With a pair of line-man's pliers, he snipped the telephone wires at the side of the house, meanwhile explaining what he was doing. He then walked unhesitatingly to one of the kitchen windows, which was in shadow—the shadow between the house and a low cliff on the hillside against which it was built. There he mounted on the boy's shoulders,

swept his pocket flashlight swiftly through the pane, and was down again.

"Nothing new in his burglar alarm," he commented. "It is well to make sure, Davy. I have examined the house before, but he might have installed a different device. There is an outside cellar door, padlocked. To the right—you can't see it in this darkness. In the cellar ceiling is a patched-up place where plumbers have worked their way under the kitchen sink. Preparation, that is it! I know what to do. You will wait for me at the kitchen door. Before I open that door, I will disconnect the alarm."

Davy felt himself thrilled by the cool certainty of the man's method; thrilled in spite of his own sense of helpless horror. When the tall, spare figure melted away into the blackness between dwelling and hill, the boy knew his companion's plan would be carried through. He walked around heavily, down-hearted, to the kitchen door. The waiting would not be long. That door would open, he would enter, and would be committed beyond recall.

There was one mad moment of hope when he was on the point of running away; of fleeing for his very life from his remorseless companion, fleeing wildly, madly. He would go back to the farm. He should never have left it. Back to the folks; back home. But he stopped, with the initial step unmade. Pedro would catch him. It was no use, even if he had enough money to carry him home. He could not escape.

The kitchen door opened. Pedro Alvarez bowed ironically in the moonlight.

"Step in, my little ladrone," he invited.

The boy hesitated with one foot across the threshold; but the Spaniard caught his hand and pulled him the rest of the way, saying laughingly: "Now you are in! We are both in! Both in the same boat!" His tone changed to one of deadly intensity. "And both with ropes around our necks. Do not forget that, my Davy boy. Those ropes will be pulled tight if any man sees us and lives to tell. Come!"

It was a big farm kitchen—the house had not been built for the country place of a city jeweler. Davy Siler felt at home in that kitchen. The length and breadth of it brought a lump into his throat. He seemed to see some busy woman hurrying up and down, back and forth, over that endless floor—a scene which was far enough in thought from their murderous mission. Insensibly he drew back. But Pedro still held his hand. He was dragged through a doorway into what he knew to be the dining-room. A door to his left in that room drew his attention. It opened on the stairway, down which a path of moonlight lay from a window on the landing.

"That is it!" Pedro whispered excitedly, tightening his clutch. "He sleeps in the first room to the right at the top of those stairs. You understand—the first to the right? The safe is there, too. Take your gun in your hand. You will go first."

"Why?" the boy demanded.

"You will go first, I tell you. Not a sound. Remember, if he should be awake, you shoot."

"But the chloroform—"

"Listen to me!" They were in the moonlight now. Alvarez threw the whole force of his dark, powerful countenance upon the shrinking boy. "You are clay in my hands! *Clay!* You will go first—into his room, with the gun in your hand. I will follow. Now go!"

WITH the swiftly registering glance of despair, Davy looked up the moonlit path. A tall vase of beaten brass stood beside the foot of the stairs, partly within,

partly outside the luminous strip. It shone scarcely more than did each polished, ascending spindle. The landing was broad—broad enough to make room against the left wall for a massive, antique secretary, the huge shadow of which fell sharply by its side and overflowed down several stairs. Seven stairs, then the landing and the shadow. The contrast of blackness and light beat upon his brain with nightmare insistence, as, clutching the revolver, he began his reluctant ascent. He had reached the sixth stair when there was a tremendous metallic crash below him. Pedro had upset the brass vase.

Instantly the boy turned his head; sharply enough to catch the remains of an evil grin on the Spaniard's face, clearly visible in the moonlight. "You did that on purpose!" trembled on Davy's lips. He was going to say it, regardless of consequences. Instead, he completed the remaining step and shrank into the shadow. Somebody was coming down the stairs.

It was a fat little man in a dressing gown. His slippered feet, his plump body and short, swinging arms, finally his round face and gray hair, came into view in the silvery light from the landing window. He seemed neither hurried nor fearful. He passed the boy deliberately, apparently without seeing him, and continued down the stairs. He was on the fourth step, when Alvarez's voice spoke from the shadows in the hall.

"Shoot!" it commanded, with cold fury. "Shoot, you fool!"

The fat man started, but descended another step. Pedro stood clear of the shadows. His own gun was leveled. "Shoot, Davy!" he repeated. When the boy did not respond, he swore bitterly. "You won't shoot? Then I will!"

At the report, tremendous in that space, the boy screamed with terror. The little man crumpled, fell headlong down the remaining two stairs, and lay still. He seemed almost prompter than the red tongue of flame from the revolver. Pedro directed his weapon lower, with a laugh.

"He's dead enough, but I'll give him another to make sure," he cried brutally.

But something had happened to Davy Siler. Perhaps the cruel shock—more violent than anything he had known in his life—had brought to the surface an unsuspected part of his nature. He was frightened. He was terribly frightened. Yet, in spite of his fear, he aimed his revolver at Alvarez's face, clear and grinning in the moonlight.

"Drop that gun!" he said.

"Eh?" The Spaniard looked up, in astonishment.

"Drop the gun! I'll shoot you, before you can raise it. As God is my judge, I will!"

Perhaps it was the half-sob with which the words were uttered that carried conviction to Pedro Alvarez. His fingers opened. The revolver landed dully on the thick rug.

"Now get out of here! I'll shoot you if you don't. Maybe I'll shoot you, anyway!"

Probably Pedro would have argued the question with another grown man. But this hysterical boy daunted him. Davy was sobbing openly now. His finger tightened on the trigger. Since the moonlight was intense, perhaps Pedro could see the finger. He stared, grinning with rage; appeared about to say something, but did not say it; then backed away, with eyes still on Davy, until he had reached the dining-room door, when he turned suddenly and dashed for the kitchen.

From the kitchen he spat two words: "You fool!" On the heels of the words, the outer door opened and shut with a slam.

"SO! Now will you help me to my feet, young man? I am in a rather awkward position."

Davy whirled, in intense astonishment. The fat little man was trying to sit up. As his feet were higher than his head, he found the operation rather difficult. But he was calmly grinning at his own discomfiture.

"I was thoughtful enough to drop just as friend Pedro pulled the trigger," he explained. "Your name is Davy? Thank you, Davy, for sparing me that second shot. I'm afraid it would have done for me. Give me a hand, and come up to my work shop. You may have to help me climb the stairs. I'm a wee bit bruised."

Davy was still staring at the dead, thus amazingly returned to life; but he came to himself and assisted the little man to his feet. He had never seen such a man; a man who, with muscles all a-quiver, still could be as calm as if death had not tapped him on the head.

"You're bleeding!" exclaimed the boy, as they slowly mounted the stairs.

The fat little man put his free hand to his forehead, and brought it away crimsoned.

"So it seems," he agreed. "He nearly got me." He chuckled. "It's a good joke on Pedro, son. He thinks me dead. Probably he thinks you will swing for it, too. I've no doubt he has arranged an air-tight alibi for himself!"

"Do you know him?" Davy Siler demanded, with astonishment.

"Well enough, well enough. We can talk afterward. I need my wind now."

He was puffing at the top of the stairs, but neither physical exertion, nor danger, it seemed, could shake his placidity of mind. He was imperturbable. Leading the way into a lighted room at the left, he waved his hand expansively, and remarked: "This is my workshop, Davy."

Davy Siler stood in the doorway and gazed. Never had he seen such a room. Never had he dreamed of one which could so upset all the standards of his own mind as to the way in which places for human beings to live in should be furnished. One end of the room, remote from the windows, was cluttered with a jumble of book-cases, set with their backs outward. They made Davy think of moving-day. In another corner, a little gas-stove burned briskly, with a kettle steaming upon it. The stove was not required for heat, for a fireplace, near at hand in the inner wall, supplied that in abundance. At the right, a cupboard, apparently well stocked with food, stood with open doors.

Davy's eye caught two points of interest connected with that cupboard: a box of sardines, opened, on the lowest shelf; and a huge orange cat, her gaze fixed meltingly upon the box, but she herself resisting temptation on a hassock just below the cupboard. The fat little man chuckled, glanced at Davy to be sure that he noted the situation, then said, quietly: "Begin, Dido," whereupon the cat sprang, landed noiselessly on the shelf, and at once began eating the sardines.

"Dido and I are both fond of sardines," the fat little man explained. "I buy the Norwegian type, packed in fish bouillon. They are the kind I fancy; and they seem to suit Dido. Step in. You think you have seen this room. You haven't seen it, at all."

He shuffled to the first of the backward-facing book-cases, and stood aside, with something of a bow. Davy understood that he was to walk around the case. He did so. At once he found himself in what was, to all intents, another room—a small room within the large one, its ceiling identical with the other, its walls composed of the right side of the book-cases. The little man laughed at his unexpected guest's astonishment.

"My sanctum!" he explained, with a flourish. "It is here that I think. It is here I entertain my guests. The walls, you will notice, are easily changed." He illustrated by pushing energetically on one book-case, then pulling on another. They were on well-oiled rollers, which glided smoothly over the floor, with the result that the little inner room was enlarged, and the fireplace became a part of it. "Now we can be comfortable! I was so busy reading Coke when you and Pedro came in that I quite forgot the chill in the air. A great man, Coke! You should read him, my boy. Every boy should read Coke. Take either chair. You will find the one nearest you very pleasant to the back."

It was a luxurious Turkish rocker in brown leather. Davy found it distinctly pleasant. He was cheered, too, by certain other accessories of the little room. To a boy whose diminishing stock of money had put him upon short rations for some weeks past, the small table loaded with food had its enticement. There were slices of bread, buttered and cut very thin; two unopened boxes of the sardines, encased in gayly colored wrappers; tea cups, and a massive silver tea urn beside the green-shaded table lamp. The little man, who seemed a keen observer, despite his round-eyed, innocent appearance, caught the boy's quick glance and interpreted it correctly.

"Refreshments first," he said, authoritatively. "The stomach is the source of life. It is entitled to right-of-way. You like sardines?"

Davy nodded. At that moment, he would have been willing to entertain an offer of sole leather, properly salted and buttered. He felt it his duty, however, to call attention to a trickle of blood which was oozing down his host's forehead from the tiny scratch above the left temple. The little man nodded.

"It might get into the tea," he agreed. "Open the drawer at the base of that book-case opposite you. You will find a roll of adhesive tape. Tear off a piece and clamp it on for me while I am opening the sardine tins."

Davy had been clever at patching up galled and injured animals around the farm. This was a different matter in its details, but essentially the same in principle. He performed his task so well that the little man vigorously nodded his commendation.

"You have a knack of it," he conceded, passing a box of sardines and the plate of buttered bread over to Davy. "How old are you—sixteen?"

Davy glowed. "Exactly sixteen, sir. Most people guess me older."

"You are a country boy—big and strong in body, so that those who guess by the body are apt to go wrong. But you have a sixteen-year-old face. Why did you come to the city? No—wait!" He held up his hand peremptorily. "That's an unpleasant topic. I can see it is. Probably you ran away from home, and you are sorry. We will drop the subject until we are through eating. Unpleasantness is bad for the digestion."

He poured the tea with as steady a hand as if no peril had ever come nigh him; then stopped himself in the act of adding milk from a silver pitcher.

"You take milk and sugar?"

Davy smiled, with some embarrassment. As a matter of fact, coffee was drunk in his home. He neither took those ingredients with his tea or omitted them. But the little man again read his mind with uncanny success.

"I see!" he said, heartily. "You have not been a tea drinker. It is my privilege to initiate you. Be thankful, Davy, that you are learning your tea drinking under

proper auspices. Too many people take theirs without sugar and milk. Such a practice may not be objectionable among the Chinese. They can hardly be expected to know better. But for civilized people to omit the sugar or the milk—either or both of them—is unthinkable. Using lemon in the tea is nearly as bad. I will prepare your cup. Drink it thankfully. Formosa oolong, my boy—the only tea for reasonable human beings."

It seemed to Davy that the fat little man, for all his ramblings, was watching him out of those innocent round eyes, and reading him through and through. If the boy had nourished any thought of deceiving his host, he abandoned the idea. This man was not to be deceived. Davy had arrived at such a conclusion when he noticed, with consternation, that he had thrust his revolver into his coat pocket, where its butt stuck out visibly. The red mounted furiously to his face as he pushed the weapon out of sight. Strangely, the little man appeared not to notice. He was busily reaching for a cut glass dish of delectable sugar wafers, which he proffered to his guest.

"You are not troubled with indigestion? I import these from England—Huntley and Palmer. Perhaps I could buy as dainty wafers in America, but there is an element of sentiment in these. One must not entirely neglect the mother country. England to America—help yourself!"

THUS they progressed to a state of repletion. Davy Siler did not analyze his feelings. He had ceased to be constrained. He hardly knew, in fact, where the midnight repast concluded and the recital of his story began. But he told that story without reservation, and the little man listened with sympathy as smiling and unaffected as his own father's would have been.

"So you ran away from home because country life was dead!" he said, thoughtfully, at last. "Yes, I suppose it can be described so. Yet it is the origin, the great mother, of all life."

"I wish I hadn't!" Davy sobbed.

"Of course you do. This Pedro—whom you met in the city, and who took advantage of your inexperience—he led you here because I had brought home a diamond from my store? Did he say why I had brought it home?"

"To work on the mounting. He said you did that every once in a while."

"Ah, of course." The little man was seized with a fit of silent merriment, which obliged him to wipe his round eyes before he could go on with his questions. "And was he not afraid that some member of the household would hear you?"

"He said there was no one else except a deaf old servant, and she slept in the attic."

Davy's host stared incredulously for a moment; then his sides shook, his eyes watered again, and the wound on his head began to bleed once more. He dabbed eyes and wound indiscriminately with his handkerchief, and at last forced himself back to a state of gravity.

"It may interest you to know, Davy," he said, "that, as a matter of fact, my family have gone away for a few weeks. I am keeping bachelor's hall. Save for these midnight luncheons, I take all my meals at the—" He caught himself abruptly, chuckled, and finished: "—at the jewelry store. If any deaf old servant occupies the attic, she is there without my knowledge."

"You are living all alone?" the boy exclaimed.

"All alone."

"And when Pedro knocked over the case, you came downstairs without even a revolver?"

The little man nodded. "The great danger from fire—"

arms, Davy," he said, "is not that one will be killed by them, but that one may kill. You said something in passing, I think, about housebreaking's being a capital offense."

"Pedro said I could be hanged for it," the boy declared.

"You could in some states." His host smiled. "Not in this state."

Davy stared. His goodnatured, rather large mouth tightened. His not too intelligent blue eyes had in them the light of a sudden understanding. "Mister—Mister Peck," he said, leaning forward with elbows on the table. "Has he been lying to me all through?"

The little man's reply was curious. It consisted of a glance at his watch and a question.

"What time do they milk the cows at your farm?"

The boy started. "Six o'clock," he said.

"Six o'clock, morning and evening. I know." His host nodded and poured himself a fourth cup of tea. "It used to be five o'clock at our place when I was a boy, but milk train schedules differ. I suppose 'David Siler, R. F. D., Crescent Corners,' would get you, at any time?"

It was a subtle question; how subtle the boy never knew. He answered, readily: "'David Siler, Junior, R. F. D. 112.'"

"Ah!" The little man smiled, cunningly. "You help with the milking, Davy?"

"I milk ten cows, my father ten."

"And while you are away?"

The boy's head drooped. "I guess mother'll help him now. Unless he's found a hired man. We've been getting along without a hired man, lately. They're hard to get anyway, and they pretty near want half the farm before they're willing to work for you."

The little man sighed. "They've always been that way, I guess," he said. "I remember my father saying the same thing. It wouldn't surprise me if he used those very words. I was older than you when I left the farm, Davy. Not much—seventeen."

DAVY SILER smiled. He had a pleasant smile. He seemed about to ask a question, then thought better of it, and the smile faded. That same smile, or another, appeared in turn on his host's face.

"No, I didn't exactly run away from home, Davy," he volunteered, in answer to the question which had not been asked. "It came to about the same thing. Father and Mother both begged me to stay. Mother never really got over my going. But I was bound to go." He sighed, again. "And what have I to show for it in my old age?—a man plotting to kill me, and plotting to fix his crime on an innocent boy!"

"Is that what he was doing?" The boy half rose from the leather chair, in his horror.

"Just that, Davy. He has a grudge against me, you see. He was released from the pen only a few weeks ago, and I—well, I had something to do with his being sent there." The little man paused with a grimness of face which seemed unnatural. "I am likely to have something to do with his going back, also," he went on, placidly. "He will find that the dead sometimes return. His plan was simple. Doubtless he prepared an alibi for himself—that can be done. You know what an

alibi is? He is not a burglar, as he would have had you believe. He is worse. No burglar of my acquaintance would have done such a thing as this. Yet most of them fear me." His round eyes twinkled. "You have noticed I am queer, Davy? Certain superstitious folk—Pedro is intensely superstitious, in spite of his polish—might hesitate to face me alone, even though they were armed and I was not. I think Pedro feels so about me. He wanted you with him; and he planned to make you murder me. But though you were weak up to a certain point, you were not weak enough for that."

Davy cut in, suddenly. His youthful face was almost as grim as that of the little man. "He knocked that vase over on purpose!"

His host nodded. "So that I would be certain to come down stairs. You see, Davy, he was sure I should be unarmed. My aversion to firearms is fairly well known. You wouldn't kill me, so he tried to do it himself. You made him leave before the second shot which would have finished me, but he would have left after that, in any event. He would have left, and if anyone had been arrested for the crime, it would have been you." He stopped again. The stern expression changed to a mischievous smile. "What did you say your R. F. D. number is, Davy?" he demanded, innocently.

The boy looked at him with wonder. "One hundred and twelve," he answered, very distinctly.

"If I should write you there—in case you are wanted as a witness against your friend, Pedro—my letter would reach you, I suppose?"

Davy nodded. He had been led up to it so artfully that acquiescence was his first thought. But a second thought came, and he suddenly hid his face on his coat sleeve. The fat little man reached across the table and patted his blond head. Something which was in his hand he slipped into the boy's hand.

"You said you came around the south side of the hill," he remarked, in a matter-of-fact voice. "The road is on the north side—in front of the house. You go east—not more than ten minutes' walk for you, I imagine. That will bring you to the railway station. What time does the early train from here pull into Crescent Corners?"

"Five-thirty."

"And how long does it take you to walk from the depot to your farm?"

The boy gulped. "About twenty minutes," he answered. He glanced into his hand, but the little man shook his head with a friendly grin.

"A gift or a loan, as you please," he said. "After all, you saved my life. I was going to say that if you can do it in twenty minutes, that will give you ten minutes to limber up your hands before you start to milk those cows. And—by the way—leave me the revolver you poked into your pocket. It might frighten the folks."

Davy Siler stood up. Tears were in his eyes. A lump in his throat bothered him. "Mister—Mister Peck," he began; but the fat little man good-naturedly interrupted him.

"You haven't time for any more talk," he cautioned. "You will have to be on your way, Davy. And my name is not 'Peck'—the jeweler, Peck!" That was another of Pedro's fairy tales. I am Judge Thomas Milmain of the Criminal Court."

J. Paul Suter, author of the foregoing story, is the creator of Horatio Humberton, unusual detective, who recently made his debut in these pages in a story entitled "The Wooden Hand." Another Humberton story—a full-sized novelette, guaranteed to kindle your interest and keep it blazing until the last word—will be published complete in an early issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES. Don't miss it!

Adventures in Graft

By JACK STRADLING

No. 2—*Adventure of the Diamond Scarfpin**

This is a plain, unvarnished tale of Detective Tom Silver, grafting plain-clothes man. Here we see the other side of the picture—and behold another reason why "Crime Doesn't Pay." . . . The wise Silver always gets his man—and something else besides. His policy is to play both ends against the middle, thus fattening his bankroll and flattening the crook's. . . In the present story he neatly traps a smooth dip, of international notoriety, and what he does to him is sufficient.—E. B.

"IT'S a pinch. A pinch!" Newsboys and bootblacks were running excitedly toward the train gates of the Polk Street depot. Travelers turned to see what it was all about, and then, casually, began to stroll toward the gates.

A crowd was gathering.

Through the gates came two well-dressed, middle-aged men escorted by an officer. Across the waiting-room they were hurried and toward the door. One of the men, prosperous and dependable-looking, was angrily accusing. The other, equally prosperous-looking, even elegant-appearing in high silk hat, formal tailored clothes, and flowing Dunderbury whiskers, was protesting vigorously against his arrest.

Stolidly the officer listened to both and continued marching them toward the door and the waiting patrol wagon outside. The crowd gaped in amazement as the two genteel, affluent-looking individuals were loaded into the vehicle; then it broke up in disappointment as the wagon rattled away.

Tom Silver, veteran detective of the Chicago Police, had been watching unobtrusively from across the waiting-room. Now he smiled a bit to himself and nodded his head in satisfaction. He had just turned to leave the depot and hurry down to the old Harrison Street lock-up, two blocks away, whither the men were being conducted, when he was suddenly accosted by an officer.

He turned to find Rawlings, the "kid copper" as he was called—a greenhorn on the Force, still in the first blush of great enthusiasm and wanting to learn all the details of the great criminal-catching game—at his elbow.

"Say, Silver," exclaimed Rawlings eagerly, "I heard the desk Sarge say this morning that John Howells, the international diamond thief, was expected in town. I didn't look up his description, but you know all of them in the Squeal Book; do you think this fellow could be Howells?"

Silver frowned. This kid copper had a most annoying way of turning up just at the wrong time.

"No, certainly not," he responded crisply, and hurried away, leaving Rawlings much disappointed.

He arrived at the station just as the two men were being arraigned before a patrol sergeant on duty at the desk. Each of the two men, accuser and accused, told his story in detail.

Cyrus W. Armstrong, wealthy clothing merchant of

Detroit, had been getting on the train when he had been unnecessarily jostled by two men. A suspicious examination had disclosed the fact that a valuable two-carat diamond scarfpin had been torn from his person. He had taken a good look at one of the men who had jostled him and had hurried out to call the police.

The man accused, giving the name of Robert Warren, drew himself up indignantly and protested volubly against such treatment being accorded an English gentleman who was traveling in this country for his health.

SILVER listened quietly. From the description, the incident had all the earmarks of a professional job. Despite the warm weather, the Englishman was carrying a light overcoat, beneath which the hands of the experienced crook work out of sight from the crowd. And as Rawlings had said, Silver knew his Squeal Book—that dictionary of wanted men—by heart.

The whiskers of the accused were considerably disguising, and his person had been altered in various other ways, but Silver was practically certain of his man.

Armstrong insisted that a search be made, and so the Englishman was led into an adjoining room. Silver slipped in also and watched. They would probably find nothing, he decided, and he was right. The accused first took out his watch and laid it down in plain sight on the table; then he emptied his pockets to the last article, and, lastly, began to divest himself of his clothing with many caustic remarks.

But nothing was found resembling the merchant's diamond scarfpin.

The accused dressed himself again, carefully, and returned to the outer room where he received the apologies of the sergeant and the discomfited Armstrong. Then he walked out, a free man.

Silver followed until they were clear of the building and fell into step alongside.

"An outrage, sir," he remarked sympathetically. The man looked him over sharply, remembered him, but as Silver was in plain clothes and well-dressed, probably did not connect him with the police.

"It certainly is," he retorted. And he added much more in the same vein. His air of injured innocence was impressive. Silver was sympathetic and condolent. He remarked that he possessed some influence politically and might be able to obtain redress.

In the same block with the station was Dan Cavanaugh's place, famous for its toddies, and Silver suggested that they go in and have a drink. Pleased with such a sympathetic listener, the man agreed, and they entered. Under the influence of the liquor with which

* Editor's Note: This is the second of a series of stories that Jack Stradling is writing for REAL DETECTIVE TALES. The third will appear in an early issue.

the detective plied him, he expanded upon his woes until soon they were as thick as only thieves can be.

Then Silver suggested a walk, and they left the saloon. Silver deftly steered his quarry around three sides of the block and arrived at the rear of the station and the entrance to the lock-up. Then he paused.

"Now then, John Howells," he said sternly, "you're under arrest and you're going to be searched by *me* unless you want to talk business first."

The Englishman, taken by surprise, began to splutter again all sorts of protestations and threats. Silver displayed the little five-pointed star of the detective bureau, and marched his captive into the building.

Down in the lock-up room, Silver inquired of the keeper for an empty cell. He was assigned one to his liking at the far end of Criminals' Row where they would be safe from interruption. In the cell, the crook assumed an air of bravado and began to take off his clothes readily, first taking off his watch and laying it down carefully on the bench.

But Silver motioned him to wait. He knew that the search in the room above had been most thorough and that there was no use repeating the performance. He picked up the man's watch, opened the back of it, and glanced at the crook in triumph. The watch was hollow, and inside was crowded Armstrong's diamond scarfpin.

"Now will you talk business?" he queried.

AND John Howells, cleverest international diamond thief of his time, nodded.

"I've got about five hundred on me," he suggested. "Will that be enough?"

Silver laughed in his face.

"Who was your pal in the crush act?" he demanded.

"I want him, too."

"That's not business," replied the crook wrathfully.

"It *is* business," replied Silver coolly. "I know you had a pal to work the jam on Armstrong and I know he'll be down here first thing in the morning with a lawyer to get you out so you might as well tell me now and save time. I'll fix it up."

Finally Howells admitted that his co-worker had been Isaac Posen, a Polish Jew, also internationally known to the police. Like all successful criminals, they had made arrangements beforehand with the best criminal lawyer in town and so had everything fixed for their defense in case they were caught.

"Who is the mouthpiece?" queried Silver.

The crook mentioned the name of one of the city's foremost criminal lawyers. Silver nodded in satisfaction.

Then, leaving Howells to meditate on the professional error in his ways, the detective locked the cell door. He noted the arrest at the desk of the lock-up keeper and told the keeper to hang the slip on the hook pending further investigation. Instead of turning in his duplicate slip at the desk upstairs, he tucked it into his pocket and walked out. There was now no record of John Howells', alias Robert Warren's, second arrest.

Not knowing the description of Isaac Posen sufficiently well to run the risk of missing his man in disguise, Silver hopped a cab and went down to Central Station where he got down the Squeal Book and studied the face of the hook-nosed Jew that looked out at him until he had memorized it in all its details. In satisfaction he noted that there were "squeals" up for the pair in London, Paris, and New York—a total of fifteen thousand dollars altogether being offered for their apprehension. In addition, it was well known that the lawyer the crooks had retained never touched a case under twenty-five thousand dollars.

"Big fish in the net today," he chuckled as he closed the book and started away.

But just outside the station he bumped into Rawlings.

"I'm going up and look in the Squeal Book, Silver," the latter said enthusiastically. "I'm going to post myself on this John Howells, and if he ever comes to town I'll nab him quick."

Silver had hard work to keep back an oath. But it required some quick thinking. "Might as well save your trouble," he said amiably. "We just had word that Howells is arrested in Toledo. He'll be sent to New York directly, and so you'll probably never see him around here. You come along with me and I'll tell you anything you want to know about the rest of them."

Rawlings jumped at the chance and plied the veteran with questions for several blocks; then, when Silver had finally taken his departure on the plea of an urgent case, Rawlings looked after him with some suspicion.

"Silver is up to something again," he muttered. "I'd like to know what it is. Perhaps if I told him what I'd found out about the Dunning pearls, he might come around. The necklace was stolen, Silver recovered it, although he swears he didn't, a lot of money changed hands somehow, no one was ever arrested, and neither Silver nor Dunning will say a word about it. That's funny. I think I'll just run up and take a look at the Squeal Book, anyhow."

AND, down in one of the corridors of the Woman's Temple Building, near the door of the spacious offices occupied by the criminal lawyer, Silver was lounging, smoking a good cigar and scrutinizing the faces of those who entered.

Finally a furtive, hook-nosed individual, dressed in the height of fashion but with a worried frown upon his brow, got out of the elevator and sidled to the lawyer's door. Silver entered close on his heels, but found the crook already closeted with the attorney. Without heeding the efforts of several clerks to deter him, Silver pushed open the door of the private office and stepped in.

The great criminal lawyer rose with an exclamation of wrath at the interruption, but calmed down when he saw who it was. Posen had just been explaining that Howells had been arrested, searched, and turned free, but that he had again fallen into the hands of the law for some reason. The Jew had hung around the station and seen his pal taken in the back way by a man who was unquestionably a detective.

"That's the man, now!" exclaimed the Jew in alarm as he scrutinized Silver thoroughly.

"Sure," replied Silver genially, "and just consider yourself under arrest for the present."

He explained matters to the lawyer, who was known as a man always ready to listen to reason. The lawyer heard him out calmly, while the Jew twisted his hands in agitation. When Silver had finished the lawyer broke into a quizzical smile.

"What would you suggest?" he asked.

Silver considered. "Best to get them on the train tonight and ride them out of town," he returned.

"And your share?" asked the attorney.

"Five thousand cash."

At that the lawyer demurred. He said it was much too high a figure.

"We'll have to work fast," replied Silver evenly. "The twenty-four hours I can hold Howells on suspicion will not last long. I'll have to turn in the slip and book him on charges pretty soon. And remember, I've got the goods."

He extracted Howells' false watch from his pocket and held it up. He opened it and blue-white gleams flashed from its interior.

The Jew broke down at that and commanded the lawyer to do anything that was asked to get them off. The lawyer shrugged his shoulders and acquiesced.

But hardly had they gone into a consultation on ways and means than the private telephone at the lawyer's elbow jingled. The voice of a clerk in the outer office came over the wire. The lawyer exclaimed in annoyance.

"There's an officer out there by the name of Rawlings," he said to Silver, "who says he's trailed you here and wants to see you immediately. Says he's found Howells in the Squeal Book and knows it was the man arrested this morning."

"My God!" exclaimed Silver. "Is there a side door we can get out?"

"Yes." The lawyer indicated the way.

"All right. See you at the station tonight, the 8:40 New York Central. Come along, Posen; you'll be my guest for the rest of the afternoon."

And, grasping the frightened Jew by the arm, Silver hurried him out the back way.

A FEW minutes later he was at the Harrison Street lock-up. He paused to speak to the keeper as he went in.

"Tear up the slip," he requested. "Made a mistake in my man and am turning him loose. Wasn't the bird I thought it was."

The lock-up keeper took down the slip and tore it up so that now there was no evidence that one Robert Warren had been detained. Silver had already done the same to his duplicate. He hurried Howells out of the station and accompanied both crooks to the luxurious suite of rooms they had engaged at one of the leading hotels. He remained with them for the remainder of the day.

At 8:30 they met the lawyer in the station and all four of them boarded the train. The crooks had a

great amount of baggage, and Silver, always helpful to a client, had picked up a small brown bag which he carried for them.

The quartet occupied adjoining seats facing each other during the run down to Michigan City, first stop on the line, and Silver sat with the bag between his feet. The crooks eyed him nervously and had little to say. The lawyer sat back, regarding Silver and the crooks, with a twinkle in his eye.

Finally the whistle blew for the stop, and Silver and the lawyer rose.

"Well," remarked the detective easily, "I'm glad to have met you gentlemen. Hope that we meet again sometime."

"Hope not," they both responded in unison, and laughed a little nervously. They seized upon the brown bag at the first opportunity and thrust it under a seat.

In the station at Michigan City the lawyer turned to Silver and handed over a long manila envelope containing something that crackled crisply. Silver pocketed it with a smile of satisfaction.

There was some time to wait until a train back to the city could be obtained, and they sat down to wait. The lawyer turned to Silver with a grin.

"You had them pretty well worried," he said, chuckling. "Do you know what was in that grip?"

"Must have been swag," replied Silver. "It was pretty light."

"You bet it was swag," said his companion. "There was thirty thousand dollars worth of diamonds in that bag. You missed a big haul."

Silver shrugged. "I suspected it," he returned, "but I had made a bargain, and I always keep my word. My honor is impregnable."

And both of them laughed.

Not long afterward Finks, the pawnbroker, purchased a diamond scarfpin, entering a bogus description of the seller, and the triumphant Rawlings returned it to its owner in Detroit.

But detective Silver made sure to keep out of the way of the "kid copper" for some time.

Watch for further "Adventures in Graft" in early issues of REAL DETECTIVE TALES. Observe how Rawlings, the "boy detective," becomes the Nemesis of the crafty Silver, and how Silver frames him and gets him bounced. Rawlings then pulls a hot one on Silver, who, much surprised, decides the kid is too clever for an enemy; so he convinces Rawlings they should enter into partnership, and together they start out to crook the crooks. But the crooks are ready for them.

"The Eleventh Juror"

A Mystery Novelette with an Unexpected Climax

By VINCENT STARRETT

Will be published complete in the next issue of

REAL DETECTIVE TALES

You will want to read this remarkable story. It is one of the best things that Starrett has ever written. To be sure of getting it, tell the nearest newsdealer to reserve a copy of the August issue for you.

The GONG

A Chinese Mystery Story

By WILLIAM HALLATT

[An atmosphere of oriental mysticism pervades this tragic tale of the Place-where-Men-are-Forgotten. It's an imaginative gem. Once read, it haunts the memory.]

THE Gong was sounding at slow intervals in the great Temple of Fu Chow. It summoned the devotees of the cult to prayer. There was something sinister in its muffled note that filled me with a vague uneasiness as I perambulated the dim aisles. I was there in the character of sightseer, a European gazing on the wonders of the East.

Immediately after the extraordinary affair at Richmond, I had embarked on a world tour. I did this partly because I considered it the duty of every man who can afford it thus to complete his education, but chiefly because I was desirous of studying in all crime and under all conditions those social problems that we call Crime, and which are with me an obsession.

Be it clearly understood that the police instinct—the joy of hunting down a fellow being—is entirely absent from my nature. I am a doctor of medicine: very much interested in man—his body and his soul. Above all, I am a student of human nature; and in the study of criminology we find this both at its best and worst—love and hate weighing about equal in the scale of life, now the one and now the other contriving to tip the beam. Nor is the so-called oriental type very different at rock bottom from our own. We are all human, all potential criminals and latent angels, and therefore, to me, all interesting.

Now in the life history of every man his religion plays a leading part; and therefore it was that I wandered that day alone into the Chinese temple. I stopped to admire a large partition screen of the most delicate tracery, resembling the grilles of our western cathedrals. It was a mass of filigree work with dragons and arabesques, so closely wrought as to render the screen opaque.

From the further side came voices—the voices of two men. One of these voices was European; it had a strong commanding timbre. The other was oriental, silky and insinuating. They conversed together in English.

"Tomorrow!" said the strong voice. "At the hour of the Gong."

"It is well," replied the silky voice, speaking with the faintest trace of accent. "It is well; for the Gong is symbolic—"

"Of what?"

"Of Death!"

I had been about to move on; but the word *death* arrested me. It was said so quietly, so softly, as to sound like a caress but the intonation was fiendish.

The silken voice continued:

"The Gong calls the faithful to the temple for prayer. It is symbolic of the Great Gong, which is struck once for each of us—and once only. This metallic voice

summons men to the contemplation of time; the Celestial to that of eternity."

"A legend!" said the strong voice disdainfully.

"No—truth!" retorted the silken. "The Great Gong will be struck for me myself one day; and even for you—foreign devil!"

"Mayhap—but not tomorrow."

"My lord is wise! The great Tso Kai says: 'What man knoweth the hour of the Gong?'"

The strong voice rose scornfully:

"I should have thought that our business would have destroyed some of your fatalism, Chang. Who has decreed the Gong hour for Yo San? Is it Fu Chow, or the great Tso Kai? No! It is I—a man!"

"My lord is wise."

The voices ceased. No further sound came through the gilded screen. I became conscious of the low hum of incantations, and the scent of joss sticks over all.

I STOOD for a moment irresolute. I knew that I had heard too much to pass idly on. I feared that I had heard too little to be of any service to the community. This much seemed certain! Two unknown men—one a European and the other a native, named Chang—were plotting the death of a person—apparently a woman—named Yo San. This crime was to be committed tomorrow at the hour of the Gong.

I had these few crumbs of knowledge and twenty-four hours in which to act. I determined to make the attempt. I was already on the move, and I quickened my pace—hugging the gilded screen on my left hand. Impassive Chinamen glided past me with folded arms and expressionless masks for faces. In spite of my hurried gait, I caused neither interest nor notice.

I began to realize that in attempting to solve this mystery, I was pitting myself against a being endowed with all the qualities which we associate with civilized man, and also with the attributes of the savage, at once intelligent and subtle, fierce and implacable. And the strong-voiced man, too—the European—what kind of white man was he, who leagued himself in crime with a Chinese?

Suddenly I found what I sought—an opening in the screen. I passed quickly through it and found myself in a long passage that ran straight before me till it ended in a square of sky. Silhouetted against this—in the very act of leaving the temple—I saw two figures: one tall and broad, the other short and squat.

I ran toward them. What I intended to do when I overtook them, I do not know—but I was spared that problem. Even as I started in pursuit, they vanished,

and when I reached the opening and looked down a steep stone stairway into the seething street, I appreciated the uselessness of my haste. There was nothing to be gained by a wild goose chase through the city.

I turned and retraced my steps. I passed on my left hand the opening through which I had entered this peculiar passage and walked on, until, without warning, I found myself in a small square apartment—the left hand wall of which was an opaque filigree screen. The three remaining walls were of solid masonry. From the one narrow loophole a ray of light came slantways and fell upon the great drum-shaped mass of brass that hung from the ceiling in the middle of the room.

I was in the Gong chamber of the temple. Further, it was the meeting place of my two unknowns. Upon the floor I found traces of their presence—a burnt butt of a cigarette and a leather riding glove. The cigarette end did not interest me; but the glove I placed carefully in my pocket.

I then walked back down the passage and out into the open air. I descended the stone staircase and found myself in the Street of the Dragon.

IMEDIATELY opposite to where I stood was the tea house of the Yellow Lantern. I entered it mechanically, seated myself, and called for tea. A demure little Chinese maid, who understood English and even spoke it a little, attended to my wants. She seemed disposed to linger; and I was quick on opportunity. I shall not attempt to reproduce her pretty pigeon English. Translated, our conversation ran as follows:

"How long have you been here in the tea house, my child?"

"Three years, your Excellency!"

"So long! You doubtless know the names of many of the customers?"

"Assuredly!"

"Have you a customer named Chang?"

"Chang is a very usual name in this city, Excellency. We have many Changs who frequent the tea house. There is Chang the fat Mandarin, who wants me to live with him—maybe it is he, whom you seek?"

"I do not know. Tell me of other Changs."

"There is Chang, the son of the Governor. He has asked me many times to leave the Yellow Lantern and go to him. But what would you, Excellency? I do not love him." This with great naivete. "And then I earn many taels here. The customers are generous. Also, I am valuable, since I speak English!" This very proudly.

"Tell me more of the Changs, please!"

"Ah, yes! The Changs. There is Chang from the silk market, who wants—"

"You to live with him?"

"Why, yes," she admitted, "he does."

"Do all the Changs desire you?" I asked.

"Not only the Changs, Excellency!"

I begged her pardon, and she continued:

"Then there is Chang, the half-caste executioner. *Oooch!* He is a horrible man, though his old uncle is most respectable—the blind beater of the Gong in the temple of Fu Chow. Also there is Chang, the captain of the Guard, who yearns for me as the turtle dove for its mate—"

I interrupted rudely:

"Tell me more," I said, "of Chang, the half-caste executioner, whose uncle is the blind beater of the Gong in the temple of Fu Chow."

"*Oooch!* He is pig's flesh!"

I laid a silver tael upon the table. "Tell me all you know of this Chang," I stipulated, "and I will add a second tael."

She smiled exquisitely.

"Your Excellency is a funny foreign devil," she opined, "to be interested in pig's flesh!"

"Yes," I admitted, "it is my peculiarity, little Plum Blossom."

She showed all her teeth.

"Your Excellency must know," she began, "that Chang, the half-caste executioner, the nephew of the blind beater of the Gong in the temple of Fu Chow—wishes me to live with him."

"That is understood!" I agreed. "And now, having heard what is presumably his only virtue, let us pass to the tale of his enormities."

"He is a very wicked man," she stated emphatically. "He holds the key of the *Place-where-Men-are-Forgotten*."

"Ah! Where is that?"

"What do I know, Excellency, who am only a plum blossom! But the priests of Fu Chow are not very respectable. People enter the temple and do not come out again."

"Indeed! What happens to them?"

She looked about her as though seeking a word. "They are forgotten," she said at length—"just forgotten."

At this point a family of wealthy Americans entered the tea house; and little Plum Blossom, having collected my second tael, was no longer to be detained.

I DRANK my tea and left the place, directing my steps toward the European Club, a hospitable house, where I had already been well received and made an honorary member. I found the club empty. I sought the steward, a dapper little Frenchman. I had found a glove, I told him, in the street of the Dragon, outside the tea shop of the Yellow Lantern. It probably belonged to a member of the club, so would he take charge of it?

He took it, and turned it over in his hand. "Riding glove," he said. "Large hand—probably English!"

"Yes," I agreed. "Can you guess its owner?"

He shook his head. "More English here than any other nationality, and mostly with big hands," he said.

I left the glove in his care, and returned to my hotel. It was getting late. I dined, and then I took a seat on the veranda, where I sipped my coffee and smoked a cigarette. I found myself reviewing mentally what I had accomplished. It was little enough. I knew something of Chang, the keeper of the key to the *Place-where-Men-are-Forgotten*. I knew nothing of the strong-voiced European, or of the girl, Yo San. I had little faith in the glove yielding evidence; time was too short. I was losing myself in speculation, when a low musical voice sounded at my elbow:

"Good evening, Excellency."

I looked up. Standing in the street, her head just showing above the rail of the veranda, was a Chinese girl. I looked more closely.

She laughed deliciously.

"You do not recognize Plum Blossom?" she cooed.

I rose instantly and took her hand across the rail.

"Of course I recognize you," I said, lying splendidly, "you were even then in my thoughts."

She rubbed her cheek on my hand that held hers.

"Truth?" she queried.

"Truth!" I answered.

"Then Plum Blossom is well pleased."

The passersby doubtless thought they beheld an idyl—East meeting West.

I still held the young girl's hand, and I was speaking earnestly:

"Listen, Plum Blossom, I feel that you are honest;

and I know that you despise Chang, whose uncle beats the Gong in the temple of Fu Chow."

"Oooch! He is pig's flesh!"

"He is something worse than that, Plum Blossom. Tell me—is he in any way connected with a girl who is named Yo San?"

"Yo San is the daughter of the blind beater of the Gong. She is the cousin of Chang. Also she is married two years to an Englishman. You know him, perhaps?"

"How is he called?"

"He is a soldier—Major Lich-ald-son."

"Lichaldson?" I repeated.

"Yes Lich—lich—ald—son," she said, stumbling over the difficult syllables.

This did not seem to help me greatly. "Lichaldson" was an impossible name. The girl had doubtless got it wrong.

"How do you know all this?" I asked.

She became an inch taller with importance as she answered:

"Yo San worked at the Yellow Lantern till she married Lich-ald-son. She speaks English nearly as well as Plum Blossom. She was very respectable—but I think unwise."

"Why unwise?"

"Because, Excellency, foreign devils never marry with Chinese girls for long."

I said thoughtfully: "You are a bit of a philosopher, little Plum Blossom. Good-night!"

The soft cheek fell again upon my hand.

"I shall see you tomorrow," she murmured—"at the Yellow Lantern?"

"Perhaps," I said, abstractedly.

"Plum Blossom would rather see you than Chang, the captain of the guard!"

"Thank you."

"What is your name, Excellency?"

"Juan," I said.

"Huon!" she cried, clapping her hands. "You have a Chinese name!"

"Huon, be it," I said. "Good-night!"

She passed away into the shadows—and I to bed. In the last moment of wakefulness, that is so often illuminating to thought, I had an inspiration. *Lich—ald—son*. The Chinese cannot pronounce our letter R; they replace it with L. *Lichaldson* was *Richardson*. I was on the track.

I AWOKE late; but I reached the European Club just after eleven o'clock. The steward had already arrived.

"Well," I said, after greeting him, "has Major Richardson claimed his glove?"

"Richardson?" he replied. "He is not a member of the club."

"No?" I queried. "I thought that in an out-of-the-world place like this every white man belonged to the European Club."

"Well—yes," answered the steward, "they do; but this Richardson is a queer fish. He consorts with the Chinese. He has married a native girl, whose father is employed in the temple of Fu Chow. I believe he has a wife in England. It was only yesterday that Jones, the shipping agent, was saying that he had heard that Mrs. Richardson was coming out. A queer fish, that man! If you know him," he concluded, "you had best give him the glove yourself. We shall not see him here."

"No, keep it!" I said. "I do not know him; and I may be mistaken. Good-morning!"

I left the little Frenchman with his accounts, and, dropping into a native restaurant, ate a light lunch. I then pursued my way toward the street of the Dragon.

The great temple of Fu Chow loomed up before me—an ugly yellow mass, with its bizarre lines sharply defined in the transparent air. This was the setting for the intended tragedy—this House of Secrets—this place where men were forgotten!

I ascended the steps out of the street and entered the temple through that square portico, in which, on the previous day, I had seen for a moment the silhouette of my adversaries. I advanced cautiously down the long straight passage till I reached the Gong chamber, which was empty. I set myself to examine it more carefully than on my previous visit. The great brass Gong hung in the center of the place, suspended from the vaulted ceiling. It was some six feet in diameter and hollow. I gazed on it with a kind of awe. This metal monster, replete with potentiality of multitudinous sound, seemed the very incarnation of the Voice of Destiny. *At the Hour of the Gong*.

I brought my wandering thoughts back to realities, and I searched the small chamber. At its further end was a low arched exit, covered with a heavy curtain. After a moment's hesitation, I passed through it. I now found myself in the dim light of what—for lack of a better name—I will designate a shrine. . . . an oblong apartment, in the middle of which was an altar. Upon the altar was reared a gilded idol—a figure bearing the attributes of fertility. I stepped over the flagstones until I stood squarely in front of it. The floor rang hollow beneath my feet. On either side of the image burned a joss stick; and before it was a lacquered tray, on which lay offerings of flowers and fruit.

At the further end of this shrine was a second entrance, leading I knew not whither. I stood for some minutes contemplating the statue. Its face was round, singularly sexless, and inscrutable. Like the Sphinx, it seemed to guard a secret. I turned, and retraced my steps into the Gong chamber; and I was scarcely there when I heard footsteps approaching down the curious passage. I recognized the quick *sup-sup* of the native and the heavy ringing tread of the European. I scented my quarry, and my eyes flashed round the small room, seeking cover.

The great Gong hung motionless about a foot from the ground. It was hollow, and as large as the face of a church clock. I stepped up into it. The chains that held it were strong. It oscillated for a moment under my weight, and then quivered into equilibrium.

Into the half light of the chamber came my two unknowns. The first was an Englishman—tall and big—handsome, too, after a fashion, but with an air of brutality on his well-formed features that marred them. He was the type of man to whom the East is destructive. He could control others, perhaps, but not himself.

The Oriental I shall not quickly forget. He was a repulsive creature of mixed blood, short and misshapen, with unnaturally long arms and large, heavy-fingered hands. His face was a squinting mask.

They halted not a yard from where I hung suspended; and I realized that they were seeking something on the ground.

"It is as dark as hell here!" growled a deep voice.

"If you dropped it here, it will be here still," purred a silken one, "for the beater of the Gong is blind."

They were the voices I had heard through the screen on the preceding day—the voices of Richardson and Chang. Followed the sound of men groping, and rooting with their feet.

"Does no one come here?" asked Richardson presently.

"No one but the blind beater," replied Chang. "It is forbidden ground!"

"In that case it is no matter. The glove is of little value."

"As my lord wills! The great Tso Kai says: 'Leave few tracks, O thou hunter, lest thou in turn be pursued!'"

A heavy laugh answered this aphorism.

"I have little fear," said Richardson.

"And Yo San will come punctually?" queried Chang.

"Yes; the little fool still keeps up that twaddle about wanting a son. She fell in at once with my suggestion that she should bring an offering to Fu Chow, and lay it on the altar of Fertile Wives."

"Good, my lord; and she will do so at the hour of the Gong?"

"Yes; she herself considered that propitious."

"It is well."

"Tell me, Chang, how will you kill her?"

There was something terribly brutal about the careless way in which Richardson asked this question; but it was not to be compared for fiendishness with the tone of Chang's answer.

"I shall kill her," he said with a gloating laugh. "That must be enough for you. It is not for foreign devils to pry into the secrets of Fu Chow."

"You swear that she will die at the Gong Hour?"

"She will pass then from the eyes of men. Later she will die."

"There will be no scandal?"

"None."

"There will be no—body?"

"Have I not promised?"

"Yes; but swear it, Chang. Take oath in your heathen way!"

For answer Chang fumbled in his dress and drew out a small object. The next moment he struck a match. The yellow light illuminated for a moment the faces of the two murderers; then Chang blew softly upon it, and the gloom returned intensified.

"See," said the half-caste. "We swear by the lighting and blowing out of a match. It is symbolic—as surely as the light was, I will keep my oath; may I be extinguished as the light if I fail in my word."

I heard a grunt of satisfaction; but no more speech. Followed the sound of retreating footsteps—then silence. I came down out of the Gong.

The afternoon was drawing in. It wanted perhaps two hours to the appointed time. The mystery was beginning to take definite shape. Yo San was coming to the temple to make an offering to Fu Chow for fertility. That must be in the adjoining shrine. She was coming at the Hour of the Gong, which was the moment selected for her assassination. Why—and how?

There was some sinister connection between the Gong and the idol and this strange place—of which Plum Blossom had spoken—at which Chang had hinted: this *Place-where-Men-are-Forgotten*.

I entered the shrine a second time, and sought a hiding place. I was unarmed; but at least I would be present when this attack was made upon a defenseless girl.

At the further end of the room, I had noticed a screen—tall enough to conceal a man. I stationed myself behind it. There were judas-holes bored in it at convenient heights from the ground, which commanded the whole shrine. There, seeing but unseen, I watched and waited.

THE hours passed on leaden wings—slowly, and still more slowly. I began to feel very much alone. From time to time my eyes reverted to the gilded image of Fu Chow—which a lively imagination clothed with the attributes of life. The mystic gloom and the scent of joss-sticks heightened this effect; and I began to wonder whether these unknown parts of the earth might not

be inhabited by unknown gods. Twice I was tempted to abandon the work to which I had set my hand; and I take no personal credit for the fact that I remained. What kept me there was the great living force that rules me—my love of the criminal science.

I grew very tired; my head nodded.

It must have wanted a few minutes to the Gong Hour, perhaps five, when there occurred a distraction. Chang slid through the curtains. He went quickly to the rear of the altar, and there fell on his knees, but not in prayer! He had opened a small panel in the base of the figure of Fu Chow; and he was touching a hidden mechanism. I divined this rather than saw it, for his action was concealed in the shadows.

He rose, lighted a lantern, and passed silently back into the Gong chamber.

From this moment I was thoroughly awake. The very air seemed charged with electricity as this strange adventure neared its culmination.

The minutes passed, big with apprehension.

The door that was close to my elbow opened, and there entered a Chinese girl carrying a large basket of fruit. She was very little—beautiful in her fashion, and not unlike Plum Blossom—though jaded, I thought.

It was a terrible moment for me; yet I felt a returning confidence. The blood of the *Conquistadores* flows in my veins—and battle was imminent!

I knew that eyes were watching from behind the curtains of the Gong chamber. Chang was there. What other enemies lurked unseen, I did not know—but I felt an all-pervading presence of Evil.

At such moments the mind works in flashes; conception and execution seem instantaneous. I whispered the girl's name from behind the screen:

"Yo San," I said, "Yo San!"

"Who speaks?" she answered timidly.

It was then that I took great risks.

"In the name of Fu Chow," I murmured, "lay down your offering where you stand and remain motionless in prayer!"

She obeyed. She was doubtless prepared for wonders. I drew a deep breath, and stood awaiting the attack.

Now happened the unforeseen. Chang's voice rose, squeaking from behind the curtains:

"Go back, foreign devil, go back! The secrets of Fu Chow are not for you!"

The strong voice of Richardson made answer with an oath; and on the instant the two men emerged struggling.

Yo San saw her husband.

"O my lord, my lord!" she cried, and made to advance toward him—but I stepped out of hiding and gripped her wrist.

"Major Richardson," I said firmly, determined on a last bluff, "I arrest you in the name of the law!"

What happened next was too rapid for the eye to visualize. Richardson sprang from the containing grip of Chang and bounded upon me. But even as he passed in front of the idol, there came a sound of whirring wheels and a great gulf sprang open in the floor. I caught a glimpse of a yawning pit—and then the stone flags were back in position. It was the work of a second, but in that second Major Richardson had disappeared.

Deep down below the altar of Fu Chow lay a terrible *oubliette*—the *Place-where-Men-are-Forgotten*.

And now the Gong Hour was come. Below, in his living grave, Richardson perhaps heard the notes. They would be the last human sounds to penetrate to those abysmal depths. The scent of joss-sticks filled the air . . . and the Gong continued to sound.

The Sardonic Tale of a Sentimental Prisoner

By

CHARLES T.
HICKEY

The SIREN

Fate, the ironic jester, was the cellmate of Convict 341

CONVICT 341 walked slowly through the doorway of his cell, faced about as the door clanged shut, and stood in a wholly unmilitary attitude of attention, waiting for the inspection of the guard who would soon pass his compartment.

A uniformed man passed along in front of the tier of cells, looking into each to make a final check and see that it contained its rightful occupant.

Convict 341 waited only until the guard had looked at him, then slowly sank down upon the cot and stared straight ahead. Thus he sat motionless, and there came a relaxation of the stern, expressionless face which he had turned toward the guard.

The reason for this was that the gray wall had melted away. Bright, warm sunlight streamed through the trees that stood sentinel-straight upon the slope of a small mountain; golden shafts of summer sunshine pierced deep into the clear, cold waters of a hidden lake.

Convict 341 was not of those hill-born men who smother in the confinement of walls; not a man who had roamed the great outdoors, or had known happiness only in those far distant places where the air of freedom is untainted by the pursuits of man. He had been a clerical worker in a great city, where he had occupied a cell not unlike the one that was now his home.

But the siren, then, was not a signal of an attempted escape; it was a call to labor from which there was no escape. His name had meant no more to his employer than his number now meant to the warden.

And the lake of his visioning was only a watercolor that had hung upon the office wall at Smedley & Sons, Importers, since his office boy days. It had been a symbol to the boy who swept out the office and ran errands. It was a symbol when the boy became the assistant bookkeeper, and it was still a symbol to the man who for twenty years was a trusted cashier.

The salary had not been great. Good enough, perhaps, for a vacation at some mountain retreat, but the man who was to become No. 341 had dreamed his dream too long. He wanted to forget the gray walls of the office, to shut out the weird taunts of the factory siren that summoned others to work and to whose summons he responded. There had grown up in him a great ambition that took complete control of his actions, his dreamings, his planning. He must own for himself the great peace and quiet of that hidden lake where the sunlight did not filter through masses of smoke, and only the imagined songs of free birds avoided the hush of complete silence.

He had saved some money when he was thirty, but an illness had used up the fund, and then he knew that he must resort to other means than saving. He invested small sums, bet at long odds at the races, risked small amounts on the Chinese lottery. But his losings about offset his winnings, and his dreams came no nearer to realization.

Then he knew. He must really gamble. No more petty long shots. One supreme game where he would bet the only treasure he possessed. His dream. If he

won, it would be fulfilled. If he lost, it would be gone forever. But into this game he must put his best. There must be no ill-considered moves, no hasty action. Only care—thought—deliberation.

He was thirty-two years of age when he perfected his plans—long, careful plans that occupied all of his spare time. Even when he was in his cage, he would pause to stare into space, not at the vision of the lake, but blankly, as one who is lost in deep thought.

Suddenly he evinced a new interest in the business. He studied accountancy at night and asked many questions about the conduct of the company's affairs.

At last he found it. A flaw in the system of accountancy used by the firm, a failure to carry out the proper checks to insure accuracy. If he were careful he could win through. Immediately he commenced to appropriate small sums of the money that passed through his hands.

The goal was fixed. Ten years, with each golden day contributing its mite toward the ultimate figure that was the sum of freedom. Patience, perseverance—a little luck and the game would be won.

One day Jimmy, the office boy, stood staring at the watercolor of the mountain lake. Turning to the man who was to become Convict 341, he said:

"Wouldn't I like to go swimming in that lake, though? Hot day like this. It would be fine, wouldn't it?"

That had started the only friendship No. 341 had ever known. His gray eyes looked kindly from out the fallow face, for here was someone else who also had a vision—his vision.

"Some day," he had said to the boy, "I am going to quit working here and get me a lake like that."

"Say, that would be a great idea," said the boy. Then doubtfully: "But that would take money—"

"It *would* take money," admitted the man, but the words were not those of one who spoke of impossible hope.

The summer before he lost the game, he had given the boy ten dollars to go to a boys' summer camp. It was his only charity. The boy had come back with enthusiastic tales of his wonderful week. Then the game had ended, and Convict 341 had lost his bet.

HIS first few weeks in the penitentiary had been almost unbearable. Not that he was offended by the prison fare, or the discipline, or the confinement. His life was not so different than it had formerly been, and he rather enjoyed his work on a lathe in the carpentry shop. His great agony was due to the ending of his dream. The long hours, with nothing to think about—He had lived with this one plan, this one hope, so long that there was nothing left. For how could a man of forty-two plan what he would do when he was sixty-two? And this was his home for the next twenty years. Twenty years was a harsh sentence for his offense, but the prosecutor had made much of his breach of trust and the man who had for so long retired within himself had not known how to plead for leniency. Without

friends or influence, there was small hope that the sentence would ever be shortened.

The siren sounded. Its long, sobbing, throaty blasts were followed with the shrieks of smaller sirens as the prison cars, loaded with gray-uniformed men, dashed out of the great gates and raced off in the distance.

The convict next him at the lathe whispered.

"God! I hope he makes it!"

Then they were herded to their cells, where they remained until the chase had abated and the investigation following had been completed.

"Who was it?" he whispered cautiously to the man at the next lathe.

"Jack Wood."

"Did he make it?"

"No; they got him. He's in the black hole."

Twice that year he was first startled, then thrilled, by the wild cry of that siren. His symbolism was reversed now. The siren was the symbol of a soul's dash for freedom. It was another game, a fresh deal. If the siren would only remain silent a little longer! Just a little more time, and the escape might be successful!

He began to see against the gray wall of his cell a glorified watercolor. Once more he took up the dream of his lifetime. Perhaps it was not too late. Now it was a game against time, the game of one man against a mighty siren.

With improvised tools stolen from the work room, he spent long hours chipping, chipping, at the concrete. His progress was barely noticeable. In a year, he had made progress. In two years he could see hopes for his plan. Three years, and he was certain that he could get out of the cell. He was now held only by a shell.

But there were other obstacles. One was that he must make his way to the prison yard and then scale the wall.

A train stopped at the station at eight forty-five o'clock each evening. He must get over the wall, drop to the roof of this train, and be whisked away into the darkness, for the cleared country about the walls was so thoroughly lighted in all directions that it would be impossible for him to make his escape on foot.

The men were returned to their cells at six o'clock. At seven-thirty and at nine they were required to stand up in front of their cots for inspection.

The seven-thirty inspection was the greatest obstacle to his plan. He could not be in his cell at that time if he were to be successful in his flight, for at that time there was a change of guards at the wall and in the yard, and he must take advantage of this circumstance so that he would not be discovered from the outside.

One night at seven-thirty, as the guard passed his cell, Convict 341 remained standing until the guard was in front of him. As the guard looked within, 341 started to sit down then straightened up. For two weeks he did this at exactly the same time.

Then he did not straighten up as the guard looked at him, but sank lower toward the cot. This he kept up for another two weeks.

Next he sat down just as the guard looked within. For weeks, as the guard appeared at the door, No. 341 sat down. Then he commenced sitting down just before the guard came to the door, and finally remained seated until the guard had passed. One night there was a relief guard. Number 341 remained seated holding a newspaper before his face as he had done for several days. The new guard called him to attention. Was his careful plan going to avail him nothing?

The next night he hesitated long, debating whether to stand or to remain seated on the chance that his old guard was back. He was in a terror of apprehension

as the steps of the sentry approached. He was tense as he remained seated with a newspaper before his face. If it were the new guard, he would be reported and forced to stand, perhaps to abandon his entire plan. Four years of work to vanish in despair.

But the guard passed by.

THE time for his escape was at hand. It was winter, for he had chosen the short days in order that darkness might conceal him, once he was out of that circle of light about the buildings. If he were observed by a guard and the train stopped, he would be able to slip off the train and have a chance of winning free.

Convict 341 had no friends outside of the walls who were enough interested in him to write him even an occasional letter. During the entire period of his incarceration, he had never received any communication from the world outside. When one evening, Guard Conroy was handed a postcard for 341, he was interested. This was unusual.

Being curious, he examined it. It was a picture of a mountain lake with a hillside of tall firs. The writing was a boyish scrawl.

You will be glad to hear I am living at a lake just like the picture. I ran away and bummed it here and got a job with a rancher. He owns the lake. Wish you were here. It sure is great for swimming and everything.

Your friend,

Jimmy.

Guard Conroy walked down the corridor and tossed the card through the bars. "Letter for you!" he called, as he passed on. The figure on the bed was interested in the newspaper held before his face. There was no response. A few minutes later, Guard Conroy made the seven-thirty inspection. As usual, 341 did not stand up, but as the guard passed by, he saw that the postcard still lay on the floor. He wondered at the convict's indifference to the first piece of mail he had ever received.

"Hey, there!" he called. "Why don't you read that postcard?"

There was no response.

Guard Conroy went on with the inspection, and as he went, he kept turning over in his mind the refusal of 341 to read the card. So he walked back to the cell.

"Stand up, 341!" he ordered.

No. 341 remained seated on his cot.

"Come, now, snap out of it!" commanded the guard in a louder voice.

Nothing happened.

Sure, now, that something was wrong, he unlocked the steel door and entered the cell, and pulled away the newspaper.

A dummy sat on the cot and 341 was gone.

The siren screamed again. The guards rushed from their quarters. Cars sprang from garages and through the gateways, as the massive gates swung open. The hunt was on.

The inmates were lined up at the doors of their cells, and a check was made to see if any others were missing.

The prison yard was searched, and under a box that had contained new machinery for the shop, Convict 341 was found. The siren had beaten him. It was, after all, the symbol of slavery.

And the siren had held as a trump in that game of time a card with the picture of a mountain lake, bearing a kindly message from the only friend Convict No. 341 had in all the world!



Finger Prints

A DEPARTMENT CONDUCTED BY DETECTIVE JOHN O'KEEFE

Readers desiring information on fingerprint work should send their inquiries to Detective O'Keefe, 1050 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago, Ill.

*No. 39—Are Fingerprints Ever Alike?

MY friend, T. G. Cooke, recognized as a leading authority on fingerprint work and criminal identification, has something to say to you this month on the perennial question: "Can two or more persons have the same fingerprints?" Mr. Cooke emphatically says they cannot. He proceeds as follows:

"What wouldn't men of criminal record give to be able to tear asunder the infallibility of fingerprints as a positive, absolute means of personal identification?"

"Too well do they know that the law, the police and every branch and phase of intelligence, the world over, accept fingerprints as positive corroborative evidence.

"Yes, and too well do they know how fast this acceptance has spread and grown by leaps and bounds until today the criminal's greatest fear and horror is fingerprint evidence.

"And that is exactly why every now and then men—some of criminal record unquestionably—endeavor through the fire of insidious propaganda to burn and destroy the infallible fingerprint law—that 'no two finger prints can be exactly identical'!

"Why do they always strike at that one law? The reason is obvious. That law is the very keystone of the arch of the whole science of fingerprints. Destroy that and you shatter the whole science.

"But that will *never* happen, for the greatest scientific minds—acknowledged authorities—have definitely proved and established the fact that no two human fingerprints can be identical.

"On January 11 of this year a two-column article appeared in the *Boston Traveler*, with this scarehead: 'Destroys theory of fingerprints—discovery of prints with identical thumb marks said to discredit system believed perfect.'

"This amusing article went on to relate how a certain Dr. G. P. Crowden, of the Institute of Physiology, University College, London, had found two identical twins having exactly the same fingerprints.

"We, of course, knew that this was false. That would be impossible, because it is in conflict with the incontrovertible fingerprint law that NO two finger prints can be identical.

"We knew it would be easy to prove the falsity of this story. We sent inquiries to Dr. Crowden and to Scotland Yard, and, just as we expected, back came the usual replies from both Dr. Crowden and from Scotland Yard, branding the whole article as an absolute falsehood, made up out of whole cloth bearing not even the semblance of truth. That

story does not worry us at all, but the fact that it got into the public press and that people who do not know that this is a false story are apt to be influenced, and that they may some time serve on juries and have this wrong impression regarding fingerprints and let this wrong impression influence their judgment—that is the regrettable side of this insidious propaganda.

"Rest assured that no two fingerprints from different persons will ever—in the history of the world—be found to be identical. Tests made not only with separated twins, but also with *conjoined* twins, have proved this. Even if the ridges were exactly alike, remember that each print contains from twenty to fifty ridges and that each ridge contains from twenty to forty sweat pores. For two prints ever to be exactly alike it would be absolutely necessary that the number, size, location and arrangement of these hundreds of sweat pores be exactly the same, and science has proved that to be an utter impossibility.

"The science of personal identification by fingerprints is yet in its infancy. Undoubtedly it is a good thing for this science to have to fight some battles in order to demonstrate its worthiness. In this way, the dross will be burned off by the intense fire of conflict and the pure unalloyed golden truth will remain.

"And so remember *always*—there will never be two fingerprints exactly alike."

In the current issue of *The Fingerprint Magazine* there is an excellent article about the Ohio State Bureau of Identification, written by Superintendent C. A. Myers, that should interest all my readers. This bureau is one of the largest in the world, having on file about 400,000 criminal records and one million index cards, with names, nicknames and aliases of persons recorded there. New criminal records are added at the rate of 4,000 a month, for the bureau co-operates with penal institutions throughout the country. The bureau also sends out a weekly bulletin that gives descriptions of "wanted" persons, stolen property, etc. Twenty-one men are employed in the bureau, which gives twenty-four hours service to all inquiries.

If you care to read this article, send me your name and address and I will mail you a copy of the magazine in which it appears. I make no charge for this, but shall be glad to send copies, free of cost and postage prepaid, to all who write for them.

I am always pleased to hear from my readers, particularly when they offer suggestions for improving this department. Let me know the sort of fingerprint information you are especially interested in, and please feel free to ask any questions concerning fingerprint work or criminal identification. All letters are carefully read and promptly answered. There is no charge for this service.

* This is the thirty-ninth fingerprint article that has appeared in *REAL DETECTIVE TALES*. Back copies of the magazine containing the previous articles will be mailed to any address by the publishers for 25c each.

What Your Penmanship Tells

(Continued from page 12)

"I distinguish in writing:

The substance and body of the letters,
Their form and manner of rounding,
Their height and length,
Their positions,
Their connection,
The intervals which separate them,
Whether these last are straight or awry,
The fairness of writing,
Its lightness or heaviness.

If all this is found in perfect harmony, it is by no means difficult to discover with tolerable preciseness somewhat of the fundamental character of the writer."

What he means by the last statement, exactly, is not easy to say; but it is easy to see that here we are arriving at a rational classification which is able to form the basis of a really scientific study of graphology, and which is included as a foundation in the best graphological thought of today.

The stack of unanswered requests for readings on (and in) my desk appalls me when I reflect that each will have to await its turn and that *REAL DETECTIVE TALES* must publish stories and cannot give all its space to our department. I shall have time this spring and summer to do a limited number of full readings to be sent directly, without waiting for publication in the magazine. So if any of my readers are real anxious for their readings they may have them at once by sending a new specimen with a dollar bill or a postal money order for a dollar to me in care of *REAL DETECTIVE TALES*. This offer will hold good until I withdraw it in the fall. The readings will be from 150 to 200 words in length.

THIS MONTH'S LESSON

FOR this lesson I wish to take up the graphological significance of *i*-dots. These deserve about the same weight as the *t*-crossings in the analysis of a given specimen. That is, they should be taken as corroborative evidence to back up indications of a more general nature. Of course no one always makes exactly the same kind of a dot or crossing at exactly the same position; judgment must therefore be exercised as to which is the prevalent form and position, and this makes it desirable that the specimen examined be of some length in order that a fairly representative number of instances may be had.

I have never insisted that the specimens sent to this department be of a prescribed length, since no attempt is made to give a complete reading. But my readers can readily see that the more representative the specimen the more likely is even a short analysis to be correct and informing. The analysis of a short specimen may be correct as far as it goes; but a longer specimen might show many modifying indications, though probably not enough to upset the whole reading.

The *i*-dots are considered from two points of view: that of their position with reference to the rest of the letter, and that of their form as such. When the dot is placed directly over the letter at a medium height, the indication is of a methodical and careful disposition, other evidences of a careful and painstaking disposition will usually be found in the specimen. When the dot is placed behind the letter, it indicates tardiness and procrastination. A sanguine and impulsive nature is indicated by the placing of the dot to the right of the letter; this goes with other indications of warm-heartedness and generosity. When the dot is very far to the right, thoughtlessness and foolhardiness may be looked for. Unworldliness and spirituality are indicated by high-placed *i*-dots; these persons are usually of the intellectual and imaginative type and are likely to be a trifle unstable emotionally.

Now as to the form of the dot. Very fine dots, which are at the same time clear (and usually high-placed), indicate spirituality and refinement. Writers who use these are idealistic and likely to be rather impractical. When the dot is slightly firmer, it indicates not an increase of spirituality, but rather a deepening and intensification of

this quality into something we may call moral courage—fighting, or effective spirituality. As the dots grow heavier there is an increase of individualistic expression, and in the very firm heavy dots we have indication of assertiveness and a go-getting temperament. The extremely heavy and blurred dots indicate a sensual and self-indulgent nature; they are often found in writing characterized by thick club-shaped down strokes and short club-shaped *t*-crossings, all of which have a similar significance.

The use of small circles for *i*-dots has already been discussed in this department. In certain trades, such as drafting and telegraphy, these are regularly used, and consequently of no special significance. When people not of these occupations use them, however, the indication ranges from that of mild eccentricity to insanity, depending upon other indications found in the same specimen. Club-shaped dots made like the upper part of an exclamation point indicate brutality and a general preponderance of the animal side of the writer's nature. One sometimes finds a wave (resembling the diacritical mark known as the tilde) used as an *i*-dot. Longer wavy lines of the same sort are sometimes found as *t*-crossings. In both cases the indication is that of humor and good spirits in general. The absence of *i*-dots indicates hastiness and general lack of concentration.

Again the reader is asked to make for himself a chart of these indications. The descriptions have been so worded that no one should have difficulty in reproducing the different sorts of *i*-dots treated. There are four under the head of "position" and seven under the head of "form" (not including, of course, the indication of absence of *i*-dots). Remember, also, that the occurrence of one indication does not mean that the writer of the specimen is the sort of person described under that indication. One swallow does not make a summer!

AND now let us turn to the analyses of the specimens chosen for reproduction this month. These are selected for contrast in style and significance, though there are some rather striking similarities in this group. I am going to ask each one whose writing is analyzed here to write me a letter criticising my analysis on the basis of his personal impression of his own qualities. I hope they will be willing to do me the favor. For that matter, I should like very much to hear from every person whose writing is analyzed in this department, whether it is reproduced or not.

less at music. Planning to give

This specimen is sent by Miss E. N. of Texas. The clear, rounded letters show that she is a straightforward and conscientious young lady, rather lacking in originality or distinctive individuality, but thoroughly wholesome and dependable. She is not the sort who does vigorous and spectacular work, but her efforts will be quiet and, as a rule, adequate and effective. Occasional awkwardnesses indicate that her character has not as yet entirely settled. But the main lines are there. Some imaginativeness is indicated by occasional flourishes of the capitals; but in the main she is matter-of-fact and full of commonsense. Hooked up-strokes and light fine *i*-dots indicate a cheerful and somewhat idealistic disposition. The rather persistent cross-cut lines at the beginnings of the capitals show that the young lady is not entirely unselfish; in fact, it would be well for her to guard against this fault. She will no doubt do acceptably any task which she sets her mind and energies to perform. She asks if she will be successful in music. The answer is that she will probably never be a great or even near great musician; but she has the qualifications for becoming a thoroughly competent, though perhaps not very inspired, performer.

Would greatly appreciate
would analyze mine

This specimen is sent by N. W. N. of Wisconsin. The small, fine and light writing indicates intellectuality of type and refinement of character. Mentally, this man is of the intuitive type. Processes and rules of logic do not mean much to him. He acts as a rule from inspirations or from more or less brilliant "hunches." The plain printlike letters indicate an artistic nature, though there are no indications that he is a productive artist. The writer's attitude toward life and his fellow men is that of a dilettante or looker-on, rather than that of a participant in the hurly burly. He is critical and likely to be a bit cynical and even sarcastic, though he is in reality very broad-minded and lenient with the failings and shortcomings of his fellows. But he cannot resist the pleasure of amused comment. The shape of the *d*'s corroborates the other indications of literary tastes; it also indicates that our friend may be somewhat of a gay Lothario! Why should he take love any more seriously than he does life in general? The answer is "Why?" Closed *o*'s and *a*'s confirm other evidences of a tendency to secretiveness, at least of the habit of not proclaiming his business from the housetops. A very interesting and attractive specimen, this.

by the most
of the found

This specimen is sent by Miss B. E. L. of New Jersey. We are at once confronted with the signs of a quite vigorous, emphatic, and decided personality. Wherever this lady is she will be the dominant personality or know the reason why. She has an abundance of physical and mental energy to back up her colorful and aggressive personality, but seems unfortunately lacking in some of the finer mental traits needed to make her really effective except among people whom she would regard as mental inferiors. Of course, this can be overcome by reading, study and proper association, aided by an attitude of willingness to learn. But time and application will be required. The writer is a fluent and effective speaker, and, with the training I have suggested, should be able to make a success in dramatics, either as an amateur or as a professional. She is generous and sympathetic in a big, whole-hearted way, and has a capacity for sincere and genuine friendship with those who can understand and discount her passion for dominance.

interested readers
1 Detective Tales

This specimen is sent by B. K., a young college student from Oklahoma, along with two other specimens which will be analyzed later. The most outstanding feature of this specimen is the combination of the long, sweeping *t*-crossings and the circular *i*-dots. Taken together, these indicate that some phase of the character or disposition is carried to such excess as to amount almost to eccentricity. It is difficult to tell just what this is. He has what amounts almost to a passion for neatness and exactitude, yet he is able to do things in a large, generous way. Perhaps in this very contradiction is where the eccentricity lies. The young man has a keen, even brilliant, mind, not of the

analytic, but of the synthetic type. That is, he thinks constructively and is able to take the broad and generous view of people and affairs. Of course insistence upon exactness is not entirely incompatible with this attitude; it is rather its complement, as the mathematicians would say. The young man has great possibilities, and it is to be hoped that he is being educated along lines which will bring these out. He should make an admirable executive.

been a much surprised
idea of your good magazine,

This specimen is from F. D. O'C. of Pennsylvania. The writer has an excellent sense of order and harmony and a fine appreciation of literary and human values. The size of the writing at once classifies him as of the intellectual type, but there are many indications that he has the assertiveness and energy of the go-getter, as well as the detachment and impartiality of the student. He is fond of outdoor life, and has the qualities of a good sportsman. In spite, however, of the writer's general love of harmony and balance, there are indications of a tendency to a lack of temperance in the indulgence of physical appetites and desires, especially the love of good food. But this is only to say that our friend is somewhat more than a well-rounded and mature human being of the male persuasion. More power to him! In personal relations the writer is disposed to be genial and kindly, but he is rather fastidious in his choice of companions, and he has a certain reserve that is seldom if ever broken down.

K. P., Superior, Wis.—Of course, I cannot make up your mind for you. I should advise you, however, to pick out a likely young fellow and marry him, for you have many indications of a strongly parental and domestic instinct. If you must have a career why not go in for social service? That sort of work would offer an outlet for your talents. You are capable of hard, faithful and conscientious work, and, given sufficient inspiration, could overcome almost any obstacles.

J. A. M., Bridgeport, Conn.—You have a hard-working and energetic disposition and a great deal of ambition and idealism. But you are rather too much controlled by your emotions and feelings. You should cultivate a more detached attitude toward life and living. You are likely to waste your energies in lost motion. Your sensitiveness, though apparently concealed by a bluff exterior, will cause you a great deal of suffering unless you can learn to overcome it.

C. P. T., Schenectady, N. Y.—You have an unassuming and rather easy-going disposition, but are ready to stand up for your rights when the matter seems of importance. You are fond of outdoor life and of good books and music and are apparently able to get a great deal of pleasure out of the simple and comparatively harmless things of life. You are, of course, lacking in aggressive ambitiousness, but you are governed by an enlightened idealism that should serve you very well as far as the enduring good things of life are concerned.

W. V. G., Chicago.—You have an active, alert intelligence and excellent health, though not an extraordinarily strong physique. In business and money matters you are prudent and careful, though by no means shortsighted or miserly. Your disposition is genial and friendly, and you seem to have a special facility for anecdote and story telling in general. You should do well in any kind of publicity work or in the management of financial affairs.

C. V. P., U. S. Naval Hospital, San Diego.—You are of the intellectual and studious type with decidedly artistic leanings, which it would pay you to cultivate. You are inclined to be rather self-conscious and diffident, though you have a pretty good idea of your own worth and ability. With increasing years you will develop more confidence, though you will probably never be bumptious or cockily self-assured; your critical mentality will save you from this and help you in many other ways.

(Continued on page 90)

MIDNIGHT OIL (Continued from page 10)

March cryptogram was an example of this. (2) Grouping: this consists in establishing with the clear text a table of a determined form whereon the letters are arranged, following defined horizontal and vertical lines, the order of which is usually governed by the order of the letters in a key word or words. The letters thus inverted placed in one after the other form the cryptogram or enciphered text. (3) The method of numbered squares or the use of grilles. Definition of the method of numbered squares will require more space than we can give it here. The grille method consists of writing words or letters in a square, the significant ones being those which will be revealed by a similarly shaped square with occasional perforations. This second square is used in enciphering the message, the spaces remaining after the significant words have been written in the perforated spaces, being filled up with any words chosen at random. When the receiver places his perforated square over the message he will see only the significant words. (4) Miscellaneous methods: these include various methods of reversing the sequence of the words or letters of the text and the two methods of Col. Roche, which we shall define later.

THIS time we shall discuss an example of the method of grouping, which may be called the Method of Divisors. We shall take for the clear text the sentence, "Depart immediately for Luxembourg." It is necessary to have key words to indicate the arrangement of the horizontal and vertical lines in enciphering; for these we shall take the words "Paris" and "France." Therefore the conventions require that the plain text be written in six vertical columns and five horizontal rows, as follows:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1:	d	e	p	a	r	t
2:	i	m	m	e	d	i
3:	a	t	e	l	y	f
4:	o	r	l	u	x	e
5:	m	b	o	u	r	g

The alphabetical order of the letters in the word *France* is, 4 6 1 5 2 3. Therefore we transpose the vertical rows thus:

	4	6	1	5	2	3
1:	a	t	d	r	e	p
2:	e	i	i	d	m	m
3:	l	f	a	y	t	e
4:	u	e	o	x	r	l
5:	u	g	m	r	b	o

The horizontal rows are still, you see, in their original position so we must next transpose them according to the order of the letters in the key word, *Paris*, namely, 3 1 4 2 5:

3:	l	f	a	y	t	e
1:	a	t	d	r	e	p
4:	u	e	o	x	r	l
2:	e	i	i	d	m	m
5:	u	g	m	r	b	o

In writing the cryptogram or finished message, we can simply use the final groups or write the letters out as they come:

L F A Y T E A T D R E P U E O
X R L E I I D M M U G M R B O

When the receiver gets the message he divides it into groups of six and first arranges it in the horizontal order indicated by the alphabetical order of the letters in the word *Paris*; then he rearranges the verticals according to the word *France* and has his clear text. One who did not know the key would have to start from the hint given by the number of letters in the message, 30. The factors of this number are 6 and 5, 2 and 15, 3 and 10. He would arrange the letters in groups using each one of the factors once for the verticals and once for the horizontals until he found the arrangement that would give the text that makes sense. In other words he would burn some midnight oil!

LAST MONTH'S CIPHER

THE message that Pierrepont found on the man he stopped was, you remember, this:

Wednesday
FPU I RHVU PUHL SLFG DFWD QDRB LQUU
HLKDUQ8L 5IOC 6DDR 7QIU 8WLG DUVH
QBPU GWHH 9DDG 8NWD 7HSW UR58 GY5D DHPP

The word *Wednesday* is rather obviously clear text, so it may be disregarded in starting to solve or "break" the cipher. The arrangement and the even number of characters leads one to suspect an inversion by the method of divisors. Trying this out and writing the groups of four vertically, instead of horizontally, we get this:

FRPSDQLHU 5 6 7 8 DOG 9 8 7 UGD
PHULFDQLQ IDQWUBWDNHRYP
UVHFWRUK 8OD ILVPHDW 5 5 5 P
IULGDBUDLCRUGHVHGDW 8DP

However, this does not seem to make much sense, so, taking a cue from the word *Wednesday*, which is the third day in the week, we take the third letter (in case of figures the fourth) before each one in the series, and this is what we get:

COMPANIES 1 2 3 4 AND 5 4 3 RDA
MERICAN INFANTRY TAKE OVER
RSECTORH 4 LAFI S MEAT 1 1 PM
FRIDAYRA I LORDERED AT 4 AM

And thus, with a slight misspelling of the name of the town, we have a message that would certainly be of value to the enemy.

THE CRYPTOGRAPHERS' CLUB

THE club is still receiving new members. Here is the list of those who have filed successful applications since the last issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES:

Frank Arthur, Keating, Ore.
Paul Bloom, 121 Oakland St., Springfield, Mass.
B. C. Ford, Box 491, Pasadena, Calif.
Arthur P. Jones, 2824 Travis St., Miami, Ariz.
Louis Kleinhans, 1011 Willow Ave., Hoboken, N. J.
Nelson Nicholson, 1017 N. Ophir St., Stockton, Calif.
L. A. Peters, 1837 Sheffield Ave., Chicago.
Edwin Phillips, 569 Seventh St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Orval Schroeder, 1320 E. Poplar St., Stockton, Calif.
Joe Vanderpool, 113 Broadway, Rensselaer, N. Y.
The following sent applications without ciphers or messages:
Paul Berg, 4747 Karlov Ave., Chicago.
George Buckman, 13 West 54 St., New York City.
Earl Richards, Plasterco, Va.
Henry Setzer, 504 12th St., Milwaukee, Wl.
Mrs. Dolly Winter, R. F. D. 9, Box 841, Princeton Heights, Seattle, Wash.

If these last named will make a simple code and a message with an explanation, they will be enrolled as full members. Meanwhile, they are on probation.

Most of the new members sent in code messages that are worth reproducing for the benefit of the fellow club members. In accordance with our new policy, the explanation of a number of those chosen for publication this month will be given in the next issue. May I urge the older members to send in more ciphers? And longer ones! This is your department, and if it is to be an interesting one we must have material. So let's go!

Joe Vanderpool says he will give the members something easy; here it is:

V-fubhyg-yvvr-gb-or-pbafvqrerq-na-nccyvpng-sbe-zzorefuvv-vbhe-Pelcgbtencuref-Pyho-
V-nz-abg-irel-tbbq-ng-fbyivat-pbqr-ceboyrfz-ohg-V-gel-uneq-

L. H. Peters submits a message that is full of meat for the earnest workers. He says that he thinks it is too hard for the fans. It isn't easy; but I'm sure that some of the older heads can solve it. He encloses sealed envelopes with the work sheet and plain text, an ideal way for submitting material to the department. He writes "The key is at the top of the sheet together with my label of the system which designates the procedure (FMhit)." Here is the cipher; see what you can do with it:

46395637355704845049564751
382759260953205647339203686
19870182956426202653124575
00865793325604565899226623
6790
27729436302864751925635360
260463986041634959056
95870782633362646392604198
42195748029086126256
34725279890266508645335204
945398600454264369208654084

(Continued on page 88)

The Haywood Plan

will put you in a big paying business

Earn \$4000 to \$7500 a year



Be Your Own Boss in one of these Shops

"My business has grown to \$30,000 a year and all in a town of 3,500 population. I had no previous experience whatsoever and I had no difficulty in learning your Tire Surgery Course," writes J. S. Chapman.

The Brewster Transport Co., with no experience in Tire Repairing, netted \$1,600 the first four months.

S. B. Teeters—"The equipment purchased from you nearly two years ago has made it possible for us to build up a business where we now have three branches."

"As you know I used to be a street car conductor. I am making more money with my Haywood Shop than I ever made before. I owe my success entirely to your help and guidance."—F. H. Soreghen.

This Same Opportunity Is Offered You

Picture yourself as the manager and owner of one of these prosperous shops. You would be earning from \$4,000 to \$7,500 a year and even more—compare that with what you are making now.

The Tire Repair business exceeds the number of Tire Repair Shops. Thousands of car owners are going without proper tire repairing because there are no tire repair shops handy.

Big Demand for Tire Repairing

To give you an idea of the tremendous need for tire repair shops just consider these statistics—

There are more than one hundred million tires on the road today. These tires are continually getting cuts, blow-outs, punctures, rim cuts, etc. Where do these car owners go? At present the scarcity of Tire Repair Shops forces them to go to some back alley place where they get one of those 5 minute "botch" jobs that causes trouble on the road a short while afterwards.

There is a real need for good tire repairing. I want ambitious men to help me extend my world-wide chain of Tire Surgery shops into every town and city in the United States and Canada.

V. A. FANTUS, Pres.,
HAYWOOD TIRE EQUIPMENT CO.
 1335 So. Oakley Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Send for Your FREE Copy NOW

I Want a Few More Ambitious Men

Men who are anxious to get ahead. Men who are honest, conscientious and willing to work. Men who are tired of working for the other fellow. To such men I offer a wonderful opportunity and will give them the co-operation that assures success.

No Previous Experience Necessary

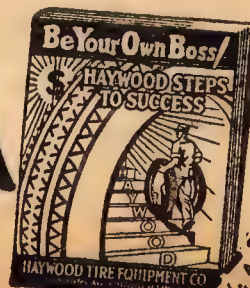
I teach you everything. I take care of every detail and establish you in business in a short time. Every step is worked out for you and has been proven successful. You get the benefits of the experience of thousands of successful Haywood Shops. Tire Surgery, under our simple instructions, can be learned at your home in a few weeks. My 18 lessons, fully illustrated, will teach you all.

Your Success Assured

I show you how to get customers. How to handle every kind of job from retreading and vulcanizing to tube repairing. A complete advertising campaign that has been successful in other cities and towns is planned for you. I show you how to keep your records, handle every detail of your shop—nothing is overlooked.

The Most Interesting Book You've Ever Read

If you are ambitious and willing to follow a proven plan, you owe it to yourself to investigate. Let me present proven facts to you. Just clip this coupon. It will bring you the most interesting book you have ever read. It covers every detail—explains everything in an interesting way and answers any questions you may have in your mind. Don't delay—this may be the turning point in your life.



A. Fantus, Pres.,
 Haywood Tire Equipment Co.,
 1335 So. Oakley Ave., Chicago, Ill.
 Dear Sir: Send me by return mail "Steps to Success" and I want to know more about the profitable profession of Tire Surgery. Yours very truly,
 Name
 Address
 City
 State

A CHAT WITH THE CHIEF

(Continued from page 8)

ly gripping about these stories that causes the reader to forget his surrounding. . . . On the whole, the next issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES, in point of sheer story interest, will probably be the best issue we have ever published. To employ one of our favorite tags: DON'T MISS IT!

AND now, having said a few lines about the present issue and spoken our little piece about the next, we shall permit our readers to comment on the last:

Dear Mr. Baird: While I am not in the habit of complimenting publishers on their publications (unless requested to do so), your magazine proves very agreeable reading in every particular. And this is not that popular concoction known as applesauce. No doubt you'll admit that your magazine has intrinsic merit. I have never seen an editor who wouldn't. [And you never will see one!—Ed.]—Eaton Yale, 1411 Eleventh Street, Santa Monica, California.

Dear sir: I am writing in regard to the different endings of *The Inside Job* in the current issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES. Personally, I like the first ending best, because it gives Corky and Harris, who at heart are not bad fellows, a chance to make good. At the same time, I am not blind to the more artistic and dramatic second ending, but I think it could be improved by having Corky wounded instead of being killed. That would remove the unhappy ending by bringing the two sweethearts, Corky and Nell, together.—Rhodes A. Nichols, 1055 Cranston Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Dear Mr. Baird: The best novel I have ever read in REAL DETECTIVE TALES was *The Thing Without a Name*, by Herbert Asbury. That story was a wonder. I earnestly hope you will get Mr. Asbury to write another novel for you. [Asbury has been promising us another novel for quite some while, but to date the manuscript has failed to reach us. We've just reminded him again of his promise, so it shouldn't be long now!—Ed.] In your March issue *The Wooden Hand*, by J. Paul Suter, ranked first with me, and *Thieves in the Night*, by John Chancellor, second. I also enjoyed *Sun Dodgers*, by M. M. Musseman, and *False Faces*, by Dick Tooker. Your novels are mighty hard to beat.—W. B. Boehnke, 19 Grandview Avenue, Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

Dear sir: I enjoy reading your excellent magazine very much, and I like *A Chat With the Chief* best of all, because it brings the reader in contact with the editor and his contributors. Al Peters, Seabury Quinn and Tom Curry are my favorites so far, but I've just started reading R. D. T. and so haven't met all your authors.—Irwin M. Abrams, 563 Tenth Avenue, San Francisco.

Dear Mr. Baird: I read a great many detective magazines, but none of them can compare with REAL DETECTIVE TALES. The variety of detective stories in your magazine absorbs me from cover to cover every month.—C. T. O'Keefe, 120 Gottingen Street, Halifax, Canada.

Dear sir: REAL DETECTIVE TALES is just the sort of magazine I have long been looking for—that is, a magazine of detective stories that does not run serials. I am enjoying Quinn's new series, *Adventures of Professor Forrester*. They are the kind of tales I like to read.—Howard C. Rath, Milwaukee.

Sir: I write to wish the magazine the greatest of luck and success. *The Other Woman*, by Vincent Starrett, is, to my thinking, the finest story in the April issue.—William N. Mattson, Box 421, Quantico, Virginia.

My Dear Mr. Baird: In my opinion (and this is not intended as flattery), REAL DETECTIVE TALES tops all the detective fiction magazines on the news-stands—

But enough! This praise grows cloying. We shall end with the above (written by LeRoy E. Fess, of Crittenden, New York), and search our mail for something of a different flavor.

Here's one that seems rather piquant:

My dear Mr. Editorial Department: In a recent issue you said you had not received a letter concerning graphology that was skeptical. Gaze upon the first! Beyond detecting certain illiteracies in the text, or noticing certain phrases, I don't believe the aforesaid graphology is anything except applesauce. Since your analyses are free for nothing, however, I'll take one, charges prepaid. In the same issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES I enjoyed one of the six complete stories more than any

other. Which one was it? I guarantee not to gyp if you get it right. My best name is J. P. Dwyer, and my best address is Highland Plaza, Birmingham, Alabama.

We refer the first part of this communication to Professor Derrick, and as for the second—shall we consult an astrologer?

And here's one from Dr. E. A. Arestad, of Cooperstown, North Dakota, who has at us right merrily and raps Quinn athwart the scone with a stuffed club:

I've just read the April number of your excellent magazine, and find it good as usual. However, in one of the stories there are some errors which show the author doesn't know what he is writing about. The story is Seabury Quinn's *The Monkey God*. On p. 32, in describing Milsted's gun and the leaden missile that was found in Milsted's brain, Mr. Quinn writes "—the lethal missile was a soft lead, conical bullet of about 20-20 caliber, while Milsted's gun is a Luger and shoots a .25 cupro-nickel-coated bullet."

Now to get straight on this: In the first place there is no 20-20 caliber. Whenever you see a rifle or pistol cartridge designated by two numbers, such as .25-20, .30-30, .45-90 etc., it means that the cartridge is of the caliber in hundreds of an inch designated, while the cartridge case has a powder capacity designated by the second number. Thus a .45-90 cartridge is of 45/100ths diameter of bullet, while the case holds 90 grains of powder. Thus the non-existent 20-20 would have to mean a mythical cartridge of 20/100 inch caliber, and a shell holding 20 grains of powder. Inasmuch as it was a soft lead missile, and shot from an air gun, it could very possibly be of .20 caliber all right, but a .20-20 bullet, even though it did exist, would mean one from a metallic cartridge, as is designated the amount of powder. Take the common ordinary .22. Here we have a soft lead missile of 22/100 inch diameter. But the .22 shell contains only from 3 to 5 grains of powder. Thus if we were to designate the .22 the way many large cartridges are called, we would have to call it a .22-3, or .22-5. So much for that.

As to the .25 Luger that Milsted carried, I beg to inform you that there is no Luger sold in this country of .25 caliber. The only two calibers in which they are available are, 7.65 m/m (.301 cal.) and 9 m/m which is equivalent to .354 caliber. As to the .25 nickel-jacketed pistol bullet having a velocity of 1200 feet per second, I beg to inform you that said bullet has a M. V. of 750 ft. per second and the penetration and muzzle energy of the .22 short. Penetration in white pine 3 inches, exactly the same as the .22 short. The latter could hardly be called a man-killer exactly. So, instead of penetrating Milsted's head and possibly the wall besides, as Mr. Quinn naively suggests, said puny slug would barely penetrate the frontal bone.

I advise your writers to familiarize themselves with firearms, so they won't make such stupid blunders again. Again, in the above story, why can't the Professor loosen up a little and give his charming ward the kiss she so much desires? After the devotion she has shown him, and probably having saved his life, he could show her that much consideration, anyhow.

It seems that the old theme of stolen idols, fatal jewels, and the appearance of some Asiatic, hideous, nocturnal monstrosities here in the U. S. is getting pretty stale and moth-eaten. It is so unreal and improbable that it leaves you with a ho-hum and a yawn after reading or trying to read such stories. The same thing applied to *The Thing Without a Name*. It was the most heathenish, hideous, impossible, superstitious opium or delirium tremens dream that ever was foisted upon the American public as a story. How any intelligent (I hope) editor could call any such idiotic nonsense a "whale" of a story, is beyond my comprehension. If it had emanated from an insane asylum, in a magazine written by the inmates, it would be doing even them a grave injustice, I'm afraid.

Outside of that, your magazine is O. K.

P. S. Your Editorials are good. Keep it up, and more power to you. Also unlike another detective story magazine, you don't have hero-criminals who ply their theft perennially, without being caught, and who become real heroes in the minds of many readers. I consider your magazine far superior to the above-mentioned publication, which I used to read, but read no more.

We passed the doctor's letter on to Quinn, himself a wielder of no mean bludgeon. As witness his reply:

The absoluteness of Dr. Arestad's statement reminds me of an anecdote related of another famous writer. A cocksure individual, airing his knowledge in the smokeroom of a P. & O. steamer, turned to a quiet gentleman, sitting beside him, and remarked, "Yes, sir, 'sugar' and 'sumac' are the only two words in the English language where *su* is given the phonic value of shu."

(Continued on page 84)

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SOLID gold effect case, guaranteed 25 years. Richly engraved, Railroad model with famous Leonard regulator. Adjusted for absolute accuracy. Backed by Million Dollar Factory.

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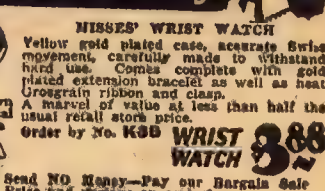
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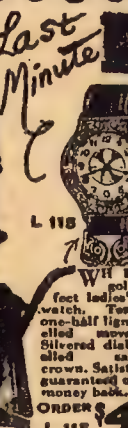
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32x3 1/2	3.65	1.95	34x4 1/2	5.75	2.95
31x4	4.00	2.00	34x4 1/2	5.75	2.95
32x4	4.50	2.25	35x4 1/2	6.00	3.25
32x4 1/2	5.00	2.50	35x5	6.25	3.50
34x4	5.00	2.50	36x5 1/2	6.25	3.50
			29x4 1/2	4.50	2.50

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Danger Ahead! (Continued from page 20)

"Seems not; this letter is meant for a woman."

"Some sweetie!" Banion's voice was harsh.

"Mrs. Andrew Mills, and the home address."

"But I tell you he's not married. I know!"

"That's the point," Jordan cut in acidly. "We think you don't know. We've been going ahead on your information, and it's full of holes. We may be trapped by this thing."

"Listen to me!" Banion wagged a finger impressively. "That man Mills is not married. He runs a bachelor establishment—all men servants, Japs, mostly. That letter's some sort of a frame. There's no woman in that house."

"Then the fact that this is addressed to a woman might be a code," I said reflectively, "though it doesn't seem likely. All the same, if there's no woman there—"

"But there is a woman there," said Jordan.

"Can't be." Banion fairly barked the denial.

"I've kept an eye on the house ever since we cooked this thing up," Jordan retorted. "I didn't altogether trust your information. And I've seen a woman, a rather young woman—pretty, too—go in and out. She had that chauffeur we saw, that Oscar, drive her around. She's living there. And I think," he concluded, "that Mills was telling the truth; she was in the car when we kidnapped him."

"The old goat," said Banion softly. "Keeping a woman right there in his home. Calls her his wife. I wonder," he half whispered, "I wonder."

"Might be his wife, you know," I put in. "Some men have 'em."

"If he is keeping some girl there," Banion continued, paying us not the smallest attention, "I'll kill him!"

WE stared, but he seemed to be talking more to himself than to us.

"And if he's married, I'll blow him to kingdom come! I'll blow him to kingdom come! I'll blow him," and his voice rose to a squeal, "to kingdom come!"

There was dead silence in the little room. Was this Banion? His face was gray and old, his eyes half closed.

"Let me see that letter," he suddenly demanded. But he read no further than the opening words.

"My dear Charlie," he whispered. "My dear Charlie..."

I think, even then, that he tried to get some sort of grip upon himself, tried visibly to collect his weak forces. And I think that Jordan should have waited for the thing, whatever it was, to work out. But Jordan was not in the daze in which I found myself. He was eyeing Banion keenly.

"What's the matter, you?" he said savagely. "What business is it of yours?"

Banion did not look at him, did not appear to hear.

"What's all this talk of blowing the man to kingdom come? I know you're a dynamiter. Come clean, you little scorpion! Don't hold out on us when we've all got one foot on the steps of the jail."

"Forget it!" snarled Banion, suddenly facing him. "Think you can bluff me?"

"Then shut up on this talk of killing."

"Yeh, all right!" Banion gulped, fighting to gain hold upon his faculties. Some-

thing had dealt him a staggering blow. "All right, Jordan," he continued more evenly. "I—I went nuts for a minute, didn't I? Something I thought—something—" He seemed searching for a word. "Anyway, it's all right now. You guys frame this thing any way you want to. I've got to go."

He started to leave, when Jordan sprang across the room and caught him.

"Help hold him, Jerry!" he cried. "Don't you see? This is all a bluff, and he means it. The little devil is going to kill Andrew Mills!"

But before I could lift a hand, before I could even summon my senses to understand the thing, Banion had writhed from Jordan's clutch, and his automatic blazed twice. Jordan fell in a heap, and the heavy weapon, thrown at close quarters, caught me fairly between the eyes.

In that flash of an instant the thing was done, Banion was gone, the letter with him.

To blow Andrew Mills to kingdom come!

CHAPTER FIVE

WELL, there it was.

I must have lain some minutes in numbing pain, conscious that Jordan was inert and bleeding at my side, conscious that our plot had suddenly turned in upon us, before I could summon strength to move.

Things were bad; things were very bad, but they might have been worse. Jordan was in a dead faint, but I got help, and a doctor came—a doctor of not too good reputation, with a large practice around the Yards. He did not ask embarrassing questions.

Jordan had been hit once, through the body, but he would live, and he became conscious in time to corroborate my story that he had been cleaning his gun when it slipped from his hand and fell to the floor. This ancient alibi the doctor listened to gravely, nodded, and we got Jordan to the hospital.

I tell this thing circumstantially because you must realize that there was no other course open. I could not desert Jordan. I could not allow the police, always skeptical of "accidents" at the Yards, to begin asking questions. I had to stick.

It was after Jordan was fairly comfortable in a private room at the hospital that he got in a word. He was burning to question me, and for two minutes, while the nurse was absent, we spoke sharply in whispers.

"What now, Jerry?"

"Back to the island as fast as I can go."

"You think that Banion—"

"Sure of it! He's wild over something, and I've got to get there first."

He nodded wearily. "The stuff's off. Warn Mills and let him go; we'll have a try at something else. Damn that Banion—"

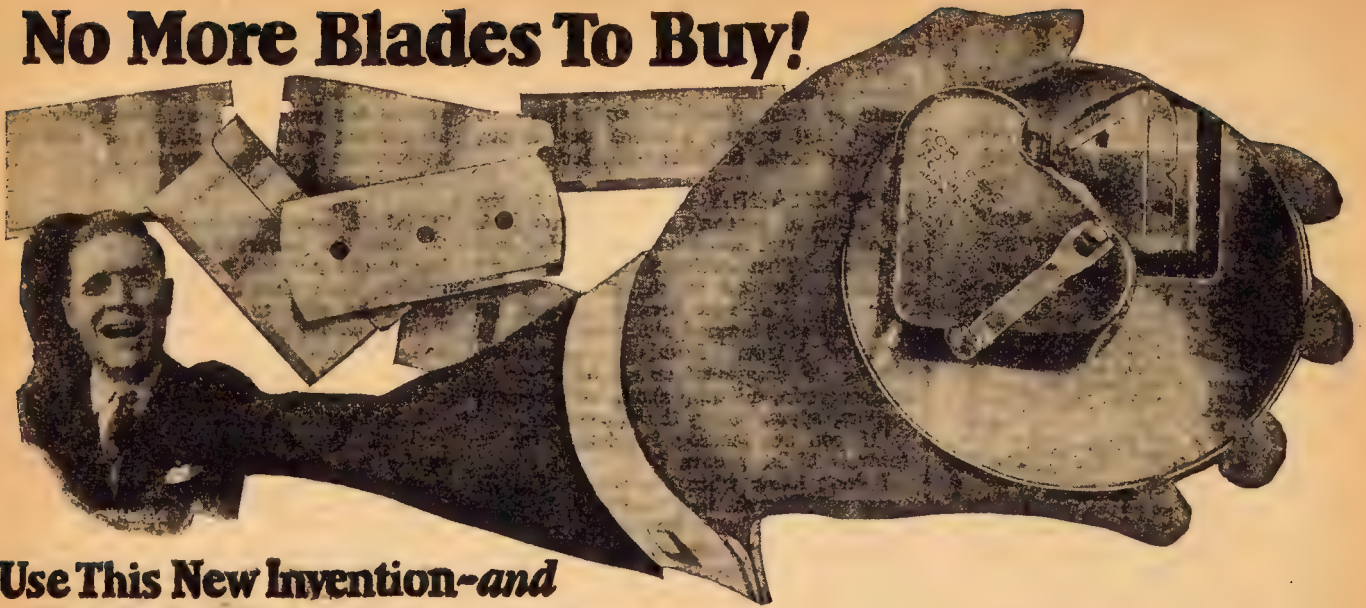
"Easy!"

"But when I think—"

"There, there! I'll see you in a day or so. Everything will be all right," and I nodded to the nurse as she entered the room, and left.

Everything would be all right! Banion had two hours start of me, and knew the way to the island as well as I. A hundred miles to the shore of the lake, and a short three to the island. He was half

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way to his goal by now, and he was armed and desperate—mad.

How to get there? I dared not take Jordan's car, not in broad day, when it could be seen, identified, and all of us traced. Of course, I might steal a car, but that would be dangerous, too.

UNCERTAINLY I went back to the room at Jordan's hotel. Better look there first, and make sure everything was shipshape. That incriminating letter might be there, dropped on the stairs, on the sidewalk. This idea became, in fact, an obsession as I hurried along, and, once at the hotel, I looked feverishly everywhere, picking up occasional scraps of paper to make certain, questioning about, peering into corners, spying along dark corridors.

"If you are looking for that letter to Andrew Mills, I have it!"

I don't know when she came. I don't know whether she had been in plain sight all the time. I only know that I turned with a sickening sense of collapse to face a slender girl on the stair landing, to stare dumbly at a white face and blazing dark eyes.

"The letter—" I stammered.

"I have the letter."

"Then—"

"Yes, Mrs. Mills," she said. "I know all about it, but I don't know where my—my husband is, and his life depends upon my getting there, at once. Come!"

"I don't understand." I was fighting for some clearer conception of what this might mean. How had she found me so promptly? And how far might it be, in hours, to the gates of prison?

She came a step nearer, fearlessly, just as she appeared to have come, alone, to this unsavory hotel. "You are one of the kidnappers," she said; "Jordan, or Jenitson. I thought both of you might be dead, but you're not, and you've got to come."

"Jenitson—Jerry Jenitson. Nobody's dead." It didn't occur to me to deny anything. "How did you find out—so much?"

"We're wasting time, and what does it matter? I didn't go to the police; I came here. Don't you understand? Unless we get to Andrew Mills at once he will be killed!"

I wanted to get to Andrew Mills too, and I realized the need for haste as much as she. But I hesitated. Better throw the whole thing away, better disappear while I might. Yet there was a chance. Somehow, and in some way, there might yet be a chance. I made a sudden decision.

"Come along. There's a train in a half hour."

"My car is parked at the corner."

"With the chauffeur?"

"No! I'm alone, and not afraid to take a risk. I'll drive wherever you say. There's a man's life at stake."

"I'll drive." And I led the way down the stairs. I had seen a way out.

I would take the car, drive through the gathering dusk and the night to the island, forestall Banion if luck would have it, and, with his own car, transport Andrew Mills to some other hiding-place.

If luck was against me, if the little dynamiter had done his work, then I would have a car to put myself far away. A rogue must think of everything, and a rogue who is without funds must think quickly.

No, I did not see how I could afford to have Mrs. Andrew Mills along.

I sprang ahead of her and raced to the curb. In an instant I was in the car and had pressed the starter button, and as her

hands clutched the door the car started to move. I caught one glimpse of her face, bewildered, questioning and somehow pitiful, then my left hand shot out and I pushed her violently away. As I wheeled around the corner I could see her leaning against the hotel for support.

Free again!

THERE was more than an even chance that the powerful motor I was driving would get me to the island before Banion, more than an even chance that I would be able to get Mills off safely. Banion would still be at large, still revengeful, and Jordan would be in the hospital, but perhaps I could pull it off alone.

I had gone perhaps a mile before I realized what the purring motor was saying—*Jerry Jenitson struck a woman, struck a woman, struck a woman...*

Enough of that! Once I took this woman to her husband, my fine dreams of ransom were at an end. I couldn't steal both of them. Heaven help me, I couldn't even buy food for both of them! And I had no illusions as to my fate. That cool little Mills would not forgive, and would not forget. I might save him from a score of mad Banions, but he had suffered too many indignities. For Jordan, wounded, there might be a chance. Perhaps even Banion would get away. But not Jerry!

Struck a woman, struck a woman, struck a woman!

Well, and if I did? Was it better to go to prison than to strike a woman—a wife fighting for her husband? Was ten years in prison better than that?

Struck a woman... struck a woman...

Savagely I turned the car. Anything to silence that insinuating, never-ending hiss of the motor. Maybe it was better to go to prison. Maybe it was better to give over my chance for an easy fortune. Maybe it was, but even as I headed back to the city, I bitterly doubted it.

How did I know where to find her? The thing didn't even occur to me. I guided the car back to the Yards, to the dingy hotel, and found her standing at the curb, waiting.

I flung open the door.

"Get in," I commanded, harshly. "How did you know I would come back?"

"I don't know," she said simply.

It was dark now, and I cut on the lights and felt the car leap as I jammed my foot down on the accelerator.

"Why did you come back?"

"I don't know."

But I *did* know. The car was running smoothly, and that whispering tune had disappeared.

"Do you believe that Banion will kill Mr.—my husband?"

"If he can. He was quite mad when I saw him."

"And when I saw him, too. Can we reach him in time?"

"Maybe."

She was silent for a long time. At last:

"I think I should tell you that if there is any way to send you to prison for a long time—forever—I will do it."

"Even if I save your husband's life?"

"You are the cause of everything. Yes, even if you save his life!"

"I knew that when I came back after you."

"Then perhaps it would be better to strike me again."

For answer I pressed harder on the gas. I was getting a little more than

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sixty. No danger of striking again; I didn't want that motor whispering.

On and on, swiftly through the night.

CHAPTER SIX

THERE was little traffic, the car was powerful, and as I checked the mileage gained against the time it became apparent that, unless Banion had had unusual fortune, we would overtake him. The girl was white-faced and silent. And I? I had plenty to think about.

Had it been only a week since that boast that nothing could go wrong with our plan—that in its very simplicity lay certainty of success? Only a week, and Jordan was wounded, Banion was somewhere ahead of us in the night, and I, arch-plotter, was speeding to the rescue of the very man I had hunted down.

And I didn't know why. Banion was nothing to me, nor Mills, nor this girl at my side, yet I kept on. There might be a chance, after all.

And then I noticed the fuel gauge on the instrument board hovering at the zero mark.

There are filling stations at frequent intervals along the highway, and I pulled up at the first that offered.

"Fill up."

The job was done in five minutes, and the station attendant extended his hand. "Fifteen gallons, and two quarts of oil—five dollars and ten cents."

Absently I reached into a pocket, looked at a handful of loose change and a crumpled dollar bill. That was all!

For some reason that has never been explained a man reaches no greater depths of shame than to be found short of funds in the presence of a pretty woman. Mrs. Andrew Mills was nothing to me, at most she was an annoyance, an incubus, but—she was a woman. And I was broke!

I counted the change carefully—two dollars and eighty cents all told.

"I'm afraid you'll have to charge it."

"Yeh!" The sardonic monosyllable amounted to a jeer.

"But I have no money."

"Dig, brother, dig!"

No use to dig. There had been certain unexpected and heavy expenses—a hundred dollars to the shady doctor, ten dollars more to the ambulance driver, and a down payment of seventy for a private room for Jordan. I hadn't known that the thing had been run that fine, hadn't stopped to cast accounts, of course. Well, there was one thing to do. Red faced, I turned to Mrs. Mills.

"Do you have any money with you?"

"No. I'm sorry."

"Then," I said to the attendant, "you'll have to accept a check. That's all there is to do."

"Yeh! And if the check's no good I'm the goat. The comp'ny pins it right back on us gas jackies."

"But this is Andrew Mills' car—"

"And I know you ain't Andrew Mills. I've seen him. Just you sit tight; there'll be a state cop along here in a half hour—"

But his voice was drowned in the sudden roar of the motor. I jammed in the clutch, and in a flash was out on the highway. It was time to go!

For a car had just passed the station, passed like a streak, headed toward the lake, and as it sped by the lights I caught one flash of its occupant, huddled over the wheel.

It was Banion!

I HEARD the startled yell of the attendant, saw him dart into the station, perhaps to use the telephone, then the

scene was gone, and we went roaring up the road. The girl hadn't seen the car, but she sensed what had happened.

Far ahead was a tail light. It was my business not to lose it for an instant, not to get it confused with any other light, to overtake it if possible. New hope flamed up. Perhaps, with Banion stopped, and with this girl out of the way, even for an hour or so—

But something was wrong. It had been barely two o'clock when Banion fled the Yards hotel. The dial on the instrument board showed that it was now nearing eight. Where had Banion been all that time, and what had Mrs. Andrew Mills been doing?

"When did Banion see you—what time?"

"Banion?" She stared.

"He showed you the letter. What time was that?"

"Oh! Not long after luncheon—I don't know."

"How long before you came to the hotel?"

"An hour—two hours."

Her husband's life was in danger, but she waited two hours before coming to the hotel to find his whereabouts! And Banion had left with blood lust in his eye, and had waited two hours before starting for the lake. There had been time to get detectives on the trail, time to assemble a posse, time for anything, and I was plunging into it, headlong.

A red lantern waved frantically across the road, a man dancing in the beam of the headlights, and, as the car swept nearer, a menacing figure with a sawed-off shotgun. No use trying to run that gauntlet. Savagely I ground on the brakes and brought the car up, smoking. Four men closed in at once.

All off now, probably. This looked like the end, and I had driven continentally into a trap, but it was only the gasoline charge. The attendant had telephoned up the line to the next station, and a state road patrolman had happened along.

"Pay this man," said the olive-drab figure curtly, "and let's hear your explanation. It's got to be good."

This was her chance. She must know that by this time we were not far from our destination. All she need do was tell this officer, in ten words, and the thing was finished. All she need do would be to cry, "Arrest this kidnapper! My husband, the wealthy Andrew Mills, is somewhere near about, held to ransom. Arrest this man!"

But she didn't.

"Officer," she said, leaning forward, "the responsibility is mine here. This man is merely acting as my chauffeur. We are hastening to my husband, Andrew Mills, who is in dire need of us."

The man regarded her doubtfully. "You wouldn't pay your gas bill—ran away."

"I left in a tearing haste. I didn't think of money!" she cried. "Oh, can't you see that we must hurry? There's not a moment to waste!"

The officer rubbed his chin. "It's not my business to collect gas bills," he said finally. "I'll take your number and make a report, and let the thing stand for the present. But I don't believe the story, altogether. Better pay this man, anyway."

"But I haven't any money—" I began, when she interrupted.

"I have just found ten dollars in my purse. In my excitement I overlooked it. Let's hurry!"

Again on the road, leaving a state policeman staring at a banknote, the tail light ahead long lost from sight, we went rocketing along at sixty-five miles an hour, and very probably, too late.

"Faster! Faster, before he looks at that money!"

BUT I couldn't go faster. The big car was now zooming along at sixty-five to seventy, the limit of its speed, and the white road was running under us like a millrace—while ahead, it seemed only a moment later, somebody was swinging another accursed lantern.

But by this time I was past caring. With a wild shriek of the siren I swept past the figures in the road and on into the dark.

The lake front at last, and I leapt out of the car and ran to the beach. There, well hidden, was the little launch, but there also, parked at the water's edge, was a car that Banion, the mad Banion, must have driven. The radiator was still hot.

Banion must have found a rowboat, and was now on his way, perhaps had reached Companion Island. Still a chance!

I tumbled into the launch and started the motor, just as the girl sprang in.

"Stay back!"

"Hurry!"

No time for argument, and no time for harsher measures. The motor caught—died—caught—sputtered—settled down to steady rhythm, and we were slipping through the water. An outboard motor is capable of about six miles an hour, or thirty minutes to the island. A man rowing, if he understands it, and is in condition, can make the same distance in about twice that time, but Banion was not in condition. With luck, we would overtake him.

And what then?

More trouble, probably, but as I reached the landing stage Companion Island seemed serene and somnolent in the moonlight. Yet—there was a strange flicker of light, vague and uncertain! I raced up the beach.

Somebody—Banion—had closed the battens, and they were locked from the inside. I went from window to window, tearing at them with my bare hands. There was something going forward within. Thin pencilings of light could be seen, and there was stealthy movement, barely audible. I thought I heard a groan. At last I found a crack through which a view of the room might be commanded, and I stood, transfixed, at what I saw.

For a long moment I was incapable of motion, frozen with horror at the scene inside.

Banion, dynamiter, was busily engaged in his calling.

The room was dimly lit by a single kerosene lamp. On the floor, clad only in an old pair of trousers that he had somewhere found, lay Andrew Mills, and Banion was leaning over him.

Dynamite is such innocuous-looking stuff. Banion had made a neat pile of the little rolls on a chair, and now and then he reached for one. They looked like sticks of yellow candy. At first I could not make out what he was doing, but as he moved into the light it became clear. He was making a chain of them around the inert figure of the millionaire. Even as I looked he grunted with satisfaction, surveyed his work and attached a long fuse.

But Mills was dead, that was apparent. Probably Banion had shot him as he entered the house. At the moment of this reflection the figure stirred slightly and groaned. Banion regarded him judiciously, and then, with slow deliberation, beat methodically upon his head with some sort of weapon, and the groaning ceased.

He rolled a wisp of paper, and set fire to it from the kerosene lamp.

And then something that had held me in a spell broke. I tore frantically at the batten, with my bare hands, gave up the effort, and cast about in feverish haste for a stick, club, something that I might use to pry the heavy shutter from its fastenings. Groping in the dark, quartering the sand like a bloodhound, working against time—minutes, perhaps seconds, my hand encountered a broken oar, and I sprang toward the house and had managed to get the shutter partly open when I was thrown violently to the ground in a sudden terrific burst of sound.

As the debris beat around me, and hammered me down, as I fought for breath in a cloud of dust and tried to protect myself, I knew that I had been too late.

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNCONSCIOUSNESS is a relative term. Certainly I had been knocked out, as the saying goes, and I was in a condition of temporary paralysis, but dimly I heard sounds, voices, high pitched, excited. Somebody was moving the timbers over my head, and somebody was saying, over and over again, "It's no good, Sharlie, no good."

A man's voice. Not Banion's, but a voice that I had heard before.

"Probably done for. It's no good, Sharlie."

I heaved the few remaining planks from me and sat up. "Mills!" I shouted incredulously, above the humming of my ears.

"Yes." The little man stood over me, still in his ridiculous trousers, many sizes too large. Somewhere in the background was the girl Sharlie—Mrs. Mills. "Yes, this is Mills."

"But you—" I stared at him in growing amazement. Not a mark, not a wound. "But you're dead!"

"Seems not," he replied dryly. "Much hurt?"

I shook my head groggily. "I seem to be all right," I said stupidly, "but you're dead."

"Stick to it."

"But you are, I saw you. I was looking through the crack, and I saw it all."

"Sharlie here says that you were trying to wrench one of the battens off a window, so you couldn't have been looking all the time."

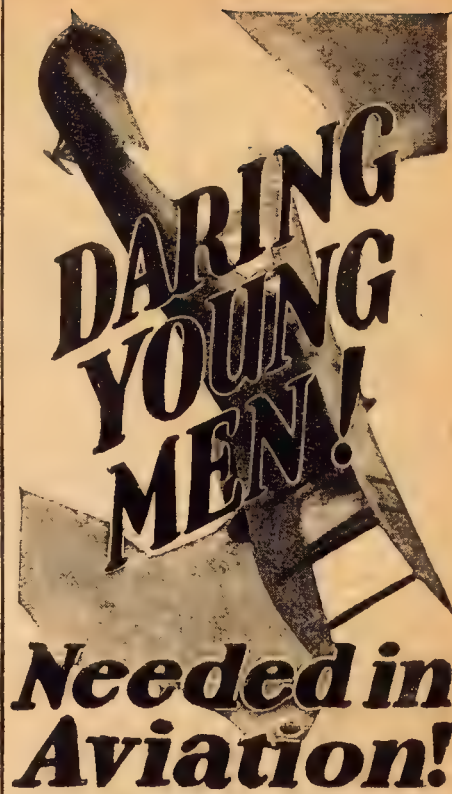
"No. But that was only a minute, and you were unconscious. He beat you over the head," I explained, as if to a child. "Then he blew you up, and blew the house up. . . ."

I rose and shook myself tentatively, stamped on the ground.

"I wasn't there when you were doing your rescue work," he said. "He didn't beat me enough, and when he fled I crawled after him. It was a close thing, but I made it. The door, by the way, was unlocked at the time you were trying to get through a window. He unlocked it."

I nodded. This was all of a piece with the headwork I had exhibited in the affair to date. I hadn't even thought about trying to get through the door. And I was still a little dizzy, and weak; I hadn't eaten in hours, and I was very, very tired—and through.

Yet the plan was there, not materially changed. Here was my victim, a little man in baggy trousers. The motor boat was at the beach, and Mills' big car on the mainland. The girl was there, certainly, but that could be managed. There had been no change except in myself. I



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didn't feel remorseful, or ashamed, or virtuous. I merely felt fed up—finished. Without a word, I started toward the launch.

"Where are you going?" called Mills.

"Away."

"Yes."

"Then the kidnapping is over?"

"But if I shouldn't want you to go?"

"You can't hold me. I'm bigger than you, and stronger, and you're not armed."

"No."

"I'll go over in the motor boat, and you can get back any way you like. Or you may come along, if you want. Was it your plan to steal my car?"

I considered this briefly. It had its advantages, and its disadvantages. "No. I'd be too easily followed."

"But sooner or later I can get you, anyway."

"Yes," I wearily agreed. "Yes, sooner or later you can." I didn't much care, not enough to argue.

"And your friends as well."

"They're not in this," I said. "This whole plan was mine, and Jordan was trying to talk me out of it when he got—got hurt, and had to go to the hospital. You can't prove anything on him."

"And the man you call Banion?"

"Crazy. A madman. I don't know where he's gone, anyhow."

"He hasn't gone." It was Sharlie, and her voice was troubled.

"Not gone!"

"There's the motor boat, in plain sight, and the row boat is just beyond. How could he have gone?"

"Swim it, maybe. It could be done."

"He can't swim. He's somewhere on the island, hiding."

I paused uncertainly. Matter of fact, incredibly, I had forgotten Banion.

"He's not responsible," I concluded.

"There's something about this that has driven him out of his senses. Better go with me in the motor boat and send some authorities after him. But he had nothing to do with the kidnapping, not really. That was all my affair. Banion doesn't need prison, he needs to be taken care of."

"Yes," she whispered, "he needs to be taken care of."

Mills was watching me keenly.

"If we go back with you, it probably means that you will go to prison all the sooner," he warned.

"All right, all right." I was growing very tired of this conversation. And a man can't escape very far, or very fast, on two dollars and eighty cents. "Come along and pin it on me, but get off the island before that little Banion crawls out of his hole. He's poison."

"Sharlie!"

A voice, Banion's voice, somewhere in the dark.

SHE wheeled on the instant. "Ted!" she called strongly. "Come here! At once!" Her voice whipped into the silence.

A shadow moved forward, slowly.

"Ted! Drop that revolver. Come!"

He came forward, cringing, almost fawning. Not the dynamiter, or the man who had so recklessly and dangerously defied Jordan, but the Banion that I knew, sniveling and meek.

And then, with a sudden illumination, I saw something that I should have guessed all along. This girl—Sharlie of the mad ride to the island, Mrs. Andrew Mills of the big house on the Drive—this was Banion's shining beacon, this was the sister who lived in the pure white shrine in his twisted and clinkered soul.

And many things became clear—Banion's amazing knowledge of Mills, his

sudden determination to kill Mills at any cost, his swift exposure to Sharlie of all our plans. I do not say that they made all of these acts plausible; I say that they made them at least understandable.

"So you meant to kill me—blow me off the island?" It was Mills, and he was staring at Banion curiously.

"Yes. Some day I'll do it."

He returned Mills' stare in sudden defiance, blaze for blaze. "Lock me up if you want—I know you will, but some time I'll get out, and I'll not forget."

"Why?"

For answer Banion turned chokingly to his sister.

"Oh, Sharlie, Sharlie!" he cried, his voice breaking like a woman's. "Not you! Not you!"

Her arm went around the shaking figure protectingly. "Tell me," she said soothingly. "Tell sister."

"He said you were his—his wife."

"I know he did."

"You were living at his house. And I know—I know you're not married. Oh, Sharlie, I ain't anything but a bum and a thief, but I'd have done anything in the world—Oh, Sharlie, why did it have to be you!"

She patted his heaving shoulder comfortingly.

"It didn't have to be me, Ted. Mr. Mills and I are not married. I am—I suppose I still am—his private secretary. And this is all, on my honor, Ted."

"But you were living at his house—I found you there. Oh, Sharlie—"

"All a trap, Ted. Listen to sister."

Patience she resumed: "I was in the car the night that we were stopped. Mr. Mills intended leaving the city for the east at eleven o'clock. He called at my home and asked me to go on the ride, because there were some final instructions he wanted me to take. His decision to go east had been a sudden one, and there were some matters that he wanted me to attend to—urgent matters of business. All clear so far, Ted?"

He nodded a little doubtfully, and gazed at her with hungry eyes. She was fighting now, fighting to bring back to him the only clean and fine thing that he had known, and I think she knew now how much she meant to him, was realizing it fully perhaps for the first time.

"As soon as the car stopped, Ted, Mr. Mills whispered, 'Something wrong. Be careful.' Then Oscar went away, decoyed by that other man, Jordan, and this man came down the road." She indicated me with a nod.

"Mr. Mills told me to keep very quiet. Don't you see, Ted, that he was being very fine and brave. He knew there was some sort of trouble. He was going into it alone, to shield me. We didn't know what it was. He said 'I'm going to get away from the car, keep you out of danger. I'll come back if I can; if I don't, wait until Oscar comes.' Oscar was the chauffeur. You understand that, Ted?"

"Yes, Sharlie. Yes."

"Then, in a few minutes, Mr. Mills came running back. He wrote a note. He said, 'After I am gone read it and follow instructions.' And he put the note under the wheel, and I didn't see him again until tonight, but I followed instructions. I have the note, and you shall see it, Ted, but I can tell you exactly what it said. It was 'This looks like a case of kidnapping, I suppose for ransom. Can't have any publicity; it would be ruinous. Don't dare address you at office. Go to my house every day, let Oscar drive you in the car. Be sure to read any mail addressed to Mrs. Andrew Mills and follow any instructions to the letter.'"

Her brother was gazing at her with a kind of dumb and adoring confidence. She was winning back his birthright.

"Then you burst in on me today, and threw a letter at my feet. You said you had killed two men at the Yards hotel, in order to get them out of the way, and that you were going to kill Mr. Mills. You shouted unutterable things, and you stormed out before I could tell you, Ted. Foolish, foolish!

"I had already seen the letter, Ted. It came by post, and yours was a copy. And I had been trying all morning to get the money, without telling anybody why I wanted it. I worked for another hour before I could go to the Yards hotel.

"You haven't killed anybody, Ted. The man Jordan was hurt, but he will recover, and you are here and sister is with you. Mr. Mills is safe and well and—innocent, as I am, Ted." She patted him protectingly.

"I didn't know, Sharlie, I didn't know, but whenever anybody hurts you, or threatens you, or even mentions you—I've been an awful fool, Sharlie."

"Yes, Ted. But it's all over now."

"My part is," I interjected glumly. "Let's be moving."

"But I thought of everything," said Sharlie, wide-eyed. "I paid the gas bill out of your money, but the rest is in the car—three hundred thousand dollars!"

WE stared.

Banion, chastened and for the moment contrite, but still Banion, gulped. "Three—hundred—thousand," he said slowly.

"Yes, in the car. All except," she again amended, "the hundred-dollar bill I gave the filling station man. That's why I wanted to get away before he saw the denomination. And I suppose that's why they tried to stop us farther along."

There was a long pause.

"Well, there it is, you," said Mills.

"Jenitson—Jerry Jenitson."

"Very well, Jerry Jenitson. The money's over on the mainland, for the taking."

"Keep it."

Through, finished, concluded! Perhaps I could have taken it, but probably not. Not the way I felt, anyway. And Banion I couldn't count upon, of course. All of them would be against me. I stared at the coming dawn and shook my head. I was at the end of my rope.

Silently I herded them into the motor boat, and chugged to shore. Yes, the money was in the car, a bundle wrapped, of all things, in an old newspaper. Bills—hundreds. Mills, his trousers flapping about his bare shanks, regarded it with lively interest. Kidnapping was out of his line, as were dynamite explosions, but this was something he understood.

"Who in the office knows about this?" he asked.

"No one," said Sharlie. "I went to your private securities box, at the Peninsular National, for it. I often go there on errands for you, you know, and I had the key. They didn't question me. I sold your Liberty bonds."

"But—how!"

"They weren't registered, but it was hard to do, anyway. I sold some to banks and some to brokers, but they couldn't understand why I wanted cash, so there's only twenty thousand in money, really, the rest is in bonds. I thought maybe that would do—I didn't know what else."

"Just so." Mills regarded me thoughtfully. "Jenitson, will you take the car,

run into the nearest little town and get me some clothes? I can't afford to be seen in this rig. Take one of those hundreds, and find something or other. Where did you hide my clothes, by the way?"

"In the cottage."

"I looked everywhere."

"I put 'em in the oven of the cooking stove."

"The only place I didn't think to look! Well, they're gone now. Give me that robe in the car, because I'm pretty well chilled. Don't be gone too long."

Giving orders. But I didn't care; I went. And they hadn't taken the money out! There it was, car, money, everything, and a long start! I don't know why I didn't run for it, but I didn't. I found a little clothing store, made a rough guess as to sizes, and was back in a half hour with an outfit. Mills looked at me quizzically, as I laid a little pile of change on the running board.

"Didn't leg it when you had the chance, hey?"

"I'm here," shortly.

He retired behind the car and dressed, and when he reappeared I had an instant's fleeting pride in my work, for he didn't look so badly.

"I suppose you know that there will be no court investigation?"

"Don't want the publicity, I suppose?"

"That's partly it. And, see here—there's twenty thousand in cold cash here, less the two hundred already spent. It's yours."

"How come?"

"Perhaps because I want to do it. And I've been talking with Sharlie. You brought her when you didn't have to do it. You risked your own life trying to save mine. Maybe I'm grateful, in a way. Anyhow, the money's yours. Not a fortune, of course, but a lot of money."

"A lot of money for a man who has two dollars and eighty cents."

"Well, it's yours."

"Don't want it; give it to Jordan. He's hurt, and broke, and I owe it to him, I think. He'd had a hundred thousand, if I hadn't booted this. I don't need it."

"Don't need it?"

"I'll get along—not going back to Grand River, anyway. I'm heading south, or west."

"On—two dollars and eighty cents?"

"I'll get along."

But I didn't go south. I went back to Grand River, and stayed there. On the day Jordan was discharged from the hospital I turned over to him twenty thousand dollars, less the two hundred already spent. And Jordan indulged in no heroics; he took the money. Plainly, he believed that I had managed, in some manner, to get a much larger sum from Andrew Mills, and just as plainly he believed that the greater end, the lion's share, was no more than my due. In similar circumstances Jordan would not fail to take his portion first. But there were no hollow protestations; he was glad to get it, and said so. The moral aspect of any transaction never deeply disturbed Jordan. He was going, he said, to Paris.

ALL that was a year ago, and now I suppose that I'm a reformed character. Anyway, I'm working for Andrew Mills, as—heaven help us!—a confidential man, and I am paid a good salary, which Andrew Mills sees that I earn. Sharlie Banion is keeping a closer eye on her errant brother, and while he will always be Banion, there will be no more dynamiting.



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She is still Mills' confidential secretary, and she was never anything more than that, but we've been going around a lot, and are becoming pretty friendly, and all, and in a month or so, if I continue to work hard, Mills will put me in charge of southern sales. Think of it!

It is like Mills, to turn as sorry a tool as I into something useful to himself.

Yes, yes, things are progressing nicely, for I have achieved respectability, and I sometimes think that Charlie Banion, even, isn't beyond reach. A home in the suburbs, and a little car, Charlie, the Tuesday evening bridge club—all that is not impossible.

Yet, I wonder.

Perhaps there is something more in life than houses and dinner parties and contentment. Somewhere blow the mighty winds of chance—somewhere there is a sweep and swing to the rhythm of the heart's beating. Somewhere it may be, there is a lift and lilt, a song—

I had a letter from Jordan the other day, and he is thinking of going to Tunis for the winter. There is, he hints, something big there, something that two men with luck and daring, men not too fastidious, might pull off. I've never been to Tunis.

I wonder.

THE END

A Chat with the Chief

(Continued from page 74)

"Are you sure?" replied Mr. Kipling.

Dr. Arestad makes his assertions with such pontifical positiveness that it seems a shame to traverse any one of them, but—*magna est veritas, et prae valet*, or words to that general effect.

Says the learned Doctor: "... the author doesn't know what he is writing about." Possibly, Doctor; possibly. Let's see:

"Whenever you see a rifle or pistol cartridge designated by two numbers," says the Doctor "... it means that the cartridge is of the caliber in hundredths of an inch, while the cartridge case has a powder capacity designated by the second number." Is that *always* so, Doctor? Did you never hear, for example, of the Springfield 30-06 cartridge? And is that bullet, which weighs 150 grains, propelled by only six small grains of powder? Oh, Doctor! (The second numerals in this case designate the year of the model of rifle for which the cartridges were originally intended. This for the benefit of the folks who ain't ordnance experts like the Doctor and me.)

Again: "As to the .25 Luger that Miltred carried ... there is no Luger sold in this country of .25 caliber. The only two calibers in which they are available are 7.65 m/m and 9 m/m."

Almost, but not quite correct, Doctor. The catalogue of the licensed American distributors of *Deutsche Waffenfabrik* weapons, which lists Luger, Mauser and Origes automatic pistols, has for the American buyer Lugers of .30 caliber, 9 m/m and 7.65 m/m. However, that is not exactly pertinent, because I fail to recall anywhere in *The Monkey God* a statement that Miltred had bought his gun

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in America. For all I know, he secured it in Germany, Belgium or some other European country. They sell things like that over there, you know. Milsted's museum was filled with objects which aren't made or sold in America, yet you failed to take me to task on that account. Surely, it's hardly fair to jump the author because the murdered man happened to possess the sort of gun not offered for sale on the American market.

Just one more round, and we're done. "As to the nickel-jacketed pistol bullet having a velocity of 1,200 feet per second, I beg to inform you," says Dr. Arestad, "that said bullet has a M. V. of 750 feet per second, and the penetration and muzzle energy of the .22 short. Penetration in white pine 3 inches, exactly the same as the .22 short. The latter could hardly be called a man-killer exactly. So, instead of penetrating Milsted's head, and possibly the wall besides, as Mr. Quinn naively suggests, said puny slug would barely penetrate the frontal bone."

Now, Doctor, be reasonable! Suppose, instead of a .25 caliber Luger I had said a .45 Colt had been used. Would you have considered the possibility of that slug penetrating Milsted's head and possibly the wall besides, naive? I doubt it. Yet, according to the official tables of ballistics and those of the Remington Arms Company, the regulation United States Army Colt .45 revolver has a muzzle velocity of only 810 feet per second—only sixty feet more than your hypothetical .22 short!

The British service Webley, also a .45, according to British Army tables, has a muzzle velocity of only 640 feet per second—sixty feet less than your remarkable .22 short! And both the Colt and the Webley, Doctor, are man-killers; don't let any one delude you into believing otherwise.

Now, in closing, just a word about the actual muzzle velocity of automatic pistols. Again quoting the *Deutsche Waffenfabrik* catalogue, the Mauser .25 (to all intents and purposes the same weapon as the Luger .25) has a muzzle velocity of 1,200 feet per second, and shoots through four and a half inches of hard pine at four paces (approximately twelve feet) with the greatest of ease.

The Luger .30, only one-twentieth of an inch larger than the pistol Milsted carried, has a M. V. of 1,435 per second, almost twice the M. V. you are willing to grant the .25. It would be a very thick-skulled man whose head would not be penetrated by either one of these projectiles, fired pointblank, as the pistol which killed Milsted was. Further, automatics fire bullets coated with steel or nickel; surely the penetrative power of such missiles is greater than that of the soft-nosed .22 short, all question of their powder charge being studiously avoided. The strongest man in the world could not hurl a pound of soft butter through a quarter-inch plank at ten feet. The average twelve-year-old boy could throw a one-pound iron ball through it without difficulty.

Pardon my seeming crudity, Doctor; but it is not the author who does not know what he is writing about.

Let's debate the Einstein theory, or the anthropomorphic beliefs of the prehistoric Egyptians, or something else that neither of us knows anything about.

So that will be all for that. The honors, it seems to us, are even; so we trust, the two gentlemen will shake hands and not test any of those high-velocity bullets on each other.

SEARCH as we will and never so diligently, we can find no further epistles disparaging us, so we shall proceed to something just received from Tom Curry:

Dear Baird: I am sending you a little dope that you might like to use in the Chat. I think it rather priceless. It was given to me by one of my pals, Bill Dayton, formerly of the *New York American*, and I hope to use it in a story some time. I am changing the names in the story, which is true. Dayton was there, and he tells the story thus:

The whole Italian quarter is honey-combed with hundreds of little dives. They are dingy, dark, smelly, dirty, and the floor is covered with sawdust. You buy a drink of wine or whisky for fifteen cents.

This dive, which we'll call Pedro's, is in a cellar. It is like all the others. You ring a bell, and are "sized up" through a crack and O. K'd. The door is unbolted, and in you go. You are taken down a long, dark passage into the back room, where there are tables with gamblers at them, a rotten pianola, sawdust on the floor—and all drinks fifteen cents.

One night last winter four tough hombres, all known to Pedro, who is a retired gangster, came into the place. They took a corner table, from which they had the range of the whole room, ordered drinks and then asked Pedro for fifty dollars, the usual handout for gangsters to lay off.

Pedro could not see it, as he was one of the boys born in the neighborhood and also he was "made," as the saying goes. A man is "made" in the Italian quarter after he has a notch on his gun (meaning he has committed murder).

Pedro reached for his gat, being drunk and not fearing them. They grabbed him before he could get to it and disarmed him. He succeeded in dropping his roll to the floor, without any of the gang noticing it. Others in the place, seeing what was going on, did the same.

While two of the stick-up men watched Pedro, who continued to argue with them, the other two took the rest of the gathering and put 'em with their backs to the wall. They went through them and gathered a total of \$66 and two cheap rings.

As they left, their parting words were not to come out for thirty minutes or everybody would be knocked off. Two shots were fired at Pedro because he would not stop arguing.

This is Pedro speaking:

"It ain't like I was a newcomer in this neighborhood. If I was a newcomer, it would be all right. But I was born and raised here. That little—leading those mugs was raised next door to me. There never was anything to him, so he took dope to get some nerve. All those birds were coked up. Didn't you notice it? They must be hard up for a place to stick up when they come around here. When they are coked up and have pulled some job the bulls have information on, they will go to work on their own grandfather for money to escape. Wolly is the shrimp's name who brought them in here."

Then the bell began to buzz. Pedro decided sufficient time had passed, so he answered it. Little Wolly walked in, followed by his pals. Wolly was crying. He asked Pedro to forgive him, saying Pedro was the best friend he ever had.

Pedro said he would never forgive him, adding, "What if you had hit me when you were shooting at me?"

Wolly returned all the money he had taken, and bought drinks for the house until everybody was cock-eyed.

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"What makes the story so complete and so priceless," adds Curry, "is the following: Wolly and his friends, after getting away from Pedro's, and realizing they had committed a *faux-pas*, went and held up a filling station nearby in order to get the money to treat the house and make up for their rudeness!"

STRANGE and full of wonder are the methods of approach used by different authors when offering their wares in the market place. The grave and the gay, the timid and the self-assured, the approach brassy and the approach subtle—these we meet every day. And occasionally a new note is struck, as, for example, the approach poetic. Such as the following, which accompanied a manuscript:

Dear Mr. Editor: I've never been in your magazine, I've not sought admittance here. I've not stood outside the Golden Gate to catch your retentive ear. Today I've come a-calling, bearing bits of **BROKEN GLASS**—have patience with me, please, sir, and upon this 'script now pass. If it meets not your requirements and you throw it out the door I'll wait here to receive it and send it out once more. But if, through valiant effort, I've made the goal you see, for the check that you'll send me I'll always thankful be.

As we slipped the manuscript of *Broken Glass* into its return envelope, we were minded of a similar verse, jingling thus:

"Dear Editor" [he wrote], "you will very kindly note there's a poem and a stamp enclosed within. If the poem stands no show use the stamp to let me know, but I'll be a poet yet, you bet—J. Flynn."

And the Editor wrote back: "Although worth it does not lack such maudlin rhymes as yours are seldom read. Here's a dollar for your letter, which is infinitely better than your poem, which you'll find enclosed—the Ed."

And another—the approach frolicsome:

Dear Mr. Baird: I've been reading R. D. T. for a long time. The stories are all fine—no kick. However, I notice that there seems to be a tendency for your writers to neglect the humorous side of crookdom and detectives. Am enclosing a little story in rhyme which might give you a laugh (if you're feeling well). It might be a good "dressing" for your story salad of Quinn, Bassford, etc. Try it over on your piano, anyhow. I enclose the proverbial "return postage" in the event that you should fail to recognize Genius!!!! Read it, anyhow. It won't cost a nickel if you reject it.

Your editorials and chats are good. Best wishes, and don't forget the sausage. Yours for a few laughs.

The favorite approach, however—and too often the most effective—is the approach eulogistic. As thus:

Dear Mr. Baird: Will you please consider as kindly as possible the enclosed offering, *Out of the Night?* I am getting a great kick out of R. D. T. and wonder why it isn't published more frequently. You have a lineup of virile, high-caliber contributors, and I can suggest no improvement except—well, with one exception, possibly!

And the worst approach—as a matter of salesmanship—is the approach boastful. Such as this:

Dear Mr. Baird: I take pleasure in offering you the enclosed story, entitled *Beads*, submitted at your usual rates. *Beads* strikes me as a flawless piece of work in so far as its plot construction, suspense and final outcome are concerned. It has the advantage of a "different" ending, as the crook outwits the detectives, and also another gang of thieves. . . . At any rate, *Beads* merits very careful consideration.

But of all the sales letters that we have read—and we've read many thousands—the one that most captivated us accompanied a manuscript called *A Dead Man's Fate*, written by Edmund V. Bertola. The note, copied verbatim, follows:

Mr. Edwin Baird: Editor, I am submitting a short detective story, and wish it will meet to your occasion. Thanking you for your rendering time, I remain, Sincerely, Edmund V. Bertola.

We read *A Dead Man's Fate*, and found it choice stuff, and we made a cash offer for the magazine rights. Whereon our author replied:

Dear Mr. Baird: Your pleasing letter, which has been received by me and which to the beneficial advantage of myself, as well as to the story that I have submitted, *A Dead Man's Fate*, has expressively inspired me to continue vigorously at my writing.

Since you have made me an offer, I shall gladly accept; on the other hand, should you desire to keep the check in your possession until the concurrence arrival of a following letter, which will relate my personal experiences and literary writing, the granted wish would be sanctionally approved by me.

However, I promise that within the passing time of five days, I will narrate with my explicit sincerity the first spark that had enlightened me to a literary calling, besides, the starting in my life of a purgative affliction that paced before me in the likes of an unsurmountable obstacle ever hindering my progressive steps.

Understand me, Mr. Baird, I am not endeavoring to arouse within you a sympathy for me, perhaps, my suffering has been very mild in comparison to that what you have witnessed, or may I say experienced; nevertheless, I ask of you too keep me in remembrance—a remembrance that may nourish me to a higher attainment.

I remain

Cordially,

Edmund V. Bertola.

Now that you've read the author's letters, we wonder if you'd care to read his story. If so, we will publish it in the *Chat*, nor change a word of it. 'Tis writ in rare English, and some of its passages suggest Shakespeare—there are so many mouthfuls of big-sounding words! Well, what say? Shall we publish *A Dead Man's Fate* next month? You will find it incomparable; we promise you that.

FROM the numerous letters about Eric Howard's *The Inside Job*, published in our April issue with two different endings, we select the following from Judson W. Reeves, an attorney of 995 Market Street, San Francisco, as fairly typical:

Dear Mr. Baird: I greatly prefer Mr. Howard's original ending. It is the juster, and, all in all, the more satisfying. I did not get the impression of glorification of criminals. My brief follows:

CORKY: Corky was not a vicious or hopeless criminal—not a criminal at heart—and had done nothing for which he should suffer death. Nell would have made him a good citizen, I think.

NELL: Nell was not really a criminal at all, and did not deserve to have her honest and saving love thwarted by the death of her man. She, the best one in the crowd, is punished the worst in the tragic ending.

HARRIS: One doesn't much care what happens to Harris. Looking at his character as a blackmailer, the tragic ending for him is the pleasanter; looking at his rather beneficent and repentant impulses, one is satisfied to let him go this time, hoping he'll either reform or get plenty in the event. Anyway, Mr. Howard's attempt to justify letting him go by showing him as really a nice blackmailer has made him an unconvincing, practically impossible character.

SMITHSON and "MRS. LEIGHTON": Here are the honest-to-gosh, dyed-in-the-marrow criminals, and they are, one assumes, properly accounted with in both endings.

At the same time, I hasten to grateful applause of your policy of not publishing stories which glorify criminals. You entertain without hurting. I wish other detective story magazines would follow suit.

In one magazine alone we read, over and over in continuing series, of a smooth pickpocket, an unregenerate old woman of the underworld, an utterly beastly Chinese, a common gunman, and a pair of thieves of the more intelligent and refined class—in all cases laughing triumphantly at the "stupid police," in no case brought to book. Not unlikely such magazines make criminals. It is no defense that these stories are true to life.

WE have been doing some heavy reading of late, outside the office, and, after plowing through divers bales of manuscripts, have looked over the latest additions to the Modern Library and other volumes. The M. L. additions include *The Cream of the Jest*, by James Branch Cabell, with an introduction by Harold Ward; *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, translated by Addington Symonds; *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, selected from his chief works, with a life of Spinoza and an introduction by Joseph Ratner, of Columbia University; *The Purple Land*, by W. H. Hudson, with an introduction by William McFee; *Ecce Homo and the Birth of Tragedy*, by Friedrich Nietzsche, translated by Clifton P. Fadiman; *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne; and *Modern American Poetry*, an anthology gathered by Conrad Aiken. We unreservedly recommend any of these books to any of our readers who like good literature. Particularly fascinating to us is Cabell's *Cream of the Jest*. Like all his work, it sparkles with a gently ironic humor, a subtle wit, a delicate satire. Cabell's knowledge of astronomy and prehistoric life seems surprisingly deficient, but that is a trifle. The charm of the book is its inimitable style. . . . The Stratford Company sends us a copy of *Best Short Stories of the World*, edited by Conrad Bercovici, and here we find an interesting assortment of authors, from Honoré de Balzac to Sherwood Anderson. Anatole France, Oscar Wilde, Maxim Gorki, Leo Tolstoi, Guy de Maupassant, Edgar Allan Poe, Anton Chekhov, are among those herein represented. . . . Our younger readers will be interested in *Walter Garvin in Mexico*, written by our own Lieutenant Burks in collaboration with General Smedley D. Butler. The story hums with ac-



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tion and sizzles with thrills. No dull moments here!... Those who read *The Thing Without a Name* in these pages, and are now asking where they can obtain it in book form, will be interested to hear that they can get the story, considerably enlarged, between book covers early next autumn. More details later. Asbury has so many books out this year that he needs a card index system to classify them. His *Up from Methodism*, published by Knopf, is still going strong, and his biography of Bishop Asbury will doubtless be on sale before these lines are read. Then will follow a book on New York gangland, also published by Knopf, and this will be followed by others. Late reports from the East are that Asbury and Maurine Watkins, who wrote *Chicago*, the diverting drama of ladies who have a gay time committing murder, will collaborate on a play based on *The Thing Without a Name*. Asbury promised to send us a review copy of *Up from Methodism*, and we promised to review it. But the book never came. We keep our promises!

THE EDITOR.

Midnight Oil

(Continued from page 72)

Louis Kleinhaus submits an excellent cipher, using symbols based on a variety of the old Playfair cipher, but we cannot reproduce it, since we must throw out all ciphers that call for figures or signs that are not on our printer's linotypes.

Paul Bloom sends a good code, but no message enciphered in it. Send us a good long one, Paul, and we'll print it.

B. C. Ford, who is a soldier, sends a message in one of the service codes. We hope he will contribute frequently, for he has apparently had a lot of experience. Here is his message:

Yknpd forey dmvyk kjrf fndgn
ajzhe dvemd ajyzi rahzi rezkj clmpq.

Arthur Jones sends a message enciphered in his C 2527. He solved our March cipher, so is entitled to honorable mention. Here is his message:

G RMNJY ZX NGCTQZB MM
CCTP APHK VLRMC PFJ
OHJOCL ROGL ADNACM KTL
RMFYI MK ACGB.

Dr. Howell sends three very interesting ciphers. We are publishing one designed to make the sequence and frequency tables of the older heads hard to use.

EALH AU OS EINMMSH IF TO-
TH WIHTGI UENTLEHI ORE
TUI PXFGEADY DEPIAI HP
YCRKHNEI DNNZHISAI HHF
APORLIFE ETXRUR GELTTRE
OHI KHUI HEIT IGE EFAI EGT-
ROO GE EMO TJE YEIEIOMGHO
ETIVEIGAEJ XU RDN REEE DE-
TRHA

L. L. Winans sends solutions for four or five of the ciphers that have appeared recently in the department, including one of the Pierpont cryptograms. He sends the following cryptogram, of which he says the key is the figure seven:

ZNOY IOVURC VF PBHMLN
OWNFE CZ UTJVO BPM
AMKTCIWATPPAN WADADG
NRU VHFOX VODDVJ
TYREEGLE YR RMNX
UTNSFFA AZO RHNKMXG
LETTERS HOLHK HUR GC
CB HUMPHPOJG OGUUA PN.

The cipher has a very interesting shifting device that will fool you if you are not careful.

Nelson Nicholson sends a cryptogram

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that is very simple, but which, for that reason, may puzzle many of the members. Here it is:

RVOEE, OATD, L, AMDLAEEGTS
AEIZCS, ITA, NIGE.

Paul Napier sends solutions for two of the March cryptograms and says that he thinks the department in the March issue was excellent. Thanks, Paul. Isn't it about time you were coming across with a cryptogram of your own for the members?

Don Graham sends the solution of the March Pierpont message, but misses a word or two. He probably copied his solution a bit hastily. He says, "Glad to see the club growing so fast. I am very much in favor of publishing the enciphered codes with the cipher. Just like the answers in the arithmetic, though some will peek!" I'm afraid the mechanical arrangement of such a system would be impossible, Don, even if we were to discount the peeling.

Edwin Phillips sends an explanation of a good variety of the Playfair code but no message. He wants to know if the code can be solved without knowing the key word. In an early issue we shall give an explanation of this system that will answer his question. Why not send us a message in your code, Mr. Phillips?

Orval Schoeber's cipher as he gives it in his explanation is an arbitrary one, but I think it can be worked out in the manner of the inversion method explained at the beginning of this month's department. Will someone try it out? Here is the cryptogram:

Kb Utkjvwjk Wvrs Ihiskjme
Wvjngk Efopbasrwrshispdcs
rjknpgovm Efyf qxed.

Here are the explanations of a few of the cryptograms from members published in the April issue:

Leonard Shapiro explains his cryptogram by saying that he enciphered it by writing the message horizontally in 13 rows, 6 letters to the row. He then read them down the 6 columns with the resulting message that was published. He adds that the *s* is used to separate the words.

Mrs. Brake sends the following work sheet for her cryptogram:

1-aiqy; 2-bjrq; 3-crs; 4-dlz;
5-lmu; 6-fnv; 7-giw; 8-hpx.

That is, she takes the first eight letters in the alphabet in the first horizontal row, the next eight in the second, and so on. In enciphering a message a letter is figured as a "power" of the number of the row in which it appears: I is the second power of the first row, and is written 12; x is the third power of the eighth row, and is written 83, etc. Easy isn't it?

George Johnson's explanation of his code and cryptogram is this: The numbers following the letters are arranged in such a manner that absolutely no key is necessary. The numerals following each of the letters, when added together, will give the number in which the letter appears in the alphabet. Thus K is the 11th letter in order in the alphabet, and the numerals 344 (which added together make 11) will stand for it. The single and double diagonal cross lines mark the ends of words and sentences respectively.

A number of solutions of the Morrisry cryptogram have come in. His code consists of a large square ruled off into 36 small squares. In each of the small squares is a letter of the alphabet in order, taking up 26 squares; the remaining small squares contain the digits from one to ten. On the top and on one side the small squares are numbered from one to six, and the fraction made by placing one of these numbers

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Ala. First I wish to thank you for your prompt service in shipping me the 50 controls, which I received today in good shape. Sold eighteen today and expect to do better tomorrow. Look for more big orders from me in the next few days.—F. F. Metzler.

Ore. Mail immediately 25 controls Monday—on eighteenth mail 25 more. Demonstration put it over big. The control is a wonder.—J. F. Kelle.

Ore. Send four dozen controls and two demonstrating boards. I ordered two dozen but retail sales have already exceeded that number.—P. I. Cutler.

Texas I herewith enclose draft for \$96.00. Please send 48 controls. I have only worked 3 days and I have 100 controls sold. Have one firm here who has 220 salesman cars. They are trying out and I will sell them for all cars.—Chas. L. Shaw.

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above the other points out the number:
thus $1/1$ would be A; $2/1$, B; $6/6$, 10; etc.

Robert Furnure makes his cipher by first numbering the letters of the alphabet, beginning with A as 11 to z as 36. The key is the date upon which he wrote, which was 12-27-1926. The message is enciphered by writing out the clear text and placing the conventional number of each letter two spaces above it. The key numbers are then written seriatim beneath the conventional numbers and a line drawn beneath. The key number immediately above any letter of the clear text is then subtracted from the conventional number and the resulting numbers form the cryptogram. I am not going to illustrate this, for it will be good practice for beginners to work it out themselves in order to get accustomed to the phraseology used in describing a cipher.

Ken Davidson sends the following conventions for his cipher: Key word, *De-*
237418695

257418095
 tective, numbered thus detective. Block
 alphabet used:

2	3	7	4	1	8	6	9	5											
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	2	4	6								
	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	3	1	9								
	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	7	8	5								

Thus R could be either 27, 28, or 25. This is an excellent cipher since it gives opportunity for frequent shifts and is exceedingly hard to "break" if one does not have the key or at least a hint of it. The last fact makes it rather a poor one for this column however, since ciphers to be worth while for our purposes should have some logical basis which works out, once you have hit it, instead of being made from a merely arbitrary and random set of conventions.

These are all the explanations we can give this time. Next month we shall give the explanations of others of the cryptograms published in the April issue and also of some of those published in this issue. I should like to hear from the members as to how they like this system, and especially from the less experienced ones as to whether they learn anything from it.

What Your Penmanship Tells

(Continued
from page 71)

E. W., Windsor, Ontario, Canada.—Your writing shows a painstaking and patient disposition and a character of sterling honesty and dependability. Your mind works rather slowly, but very steadily and surely. Once you learn a thing you have it always. You have a tendency to be a bit pessimistic and you are rather easily discouraged, especially if you feel that you have not understood a thing. You should, of course, overcome this. Cultivate more perseverance and stick-to-it-ive-ness.

A. R., Des Moines, Ia.—You have qualifications that would seem to fit you for managing and running a small business of your own, though before entering it you should work for someone else in the same business and get a thorough understanding of it. You have plenty of ambition and energy, but you must be sure that it is being directed into the right channels. You have some ability at construction or engineering work that might be profitably developed in a trade school or college.

C. D., Niagara Falls, Ont., Canada.—You are disposed to be rather too trustful of others; that is, you are willing to give them credit for possessing as much honesty and sincerity as yourself. You should learn to be more careful at taking people's statements at their face value. Try to find the motives behind what they do and say. This does not mean that you are to be distrustful and suspicious; merely that you be a bit careful and mindful of your own best interests.

G. K., Washington, D. C.—You are of a sanguine and ambitious disposition, optimistic and cheerful. A good deal of physical and mental energy is indicated. You have strong and easily aroused emotions, not always under the best of control. You are likely to be hypersensitive and to look for trouble where none really exists. Of course you should guard against this. The high i-dots indicate much idealism and in connection with other indications a poetic and imaginative nature.

P. L., Scotch Plain, N. J.—You are very generous with yourself and with others, and are likely to indulge in mild extravagance; but you are not wasteful nor really careless. You have a degree of executive ability and might well make a career save

as executive secretary of a society or some other association, though you would have to overcome your tendency to avoid matters of detail or develop the habit of seeing that others actually attend to them. You are optimistic and cheerful. The slant of your writing shows a rather high degree of emotionality.

J. F. M., Pennhurst, Pa.—You have a witty and humorous disposition, backed up with a good fund of energy and ability of self assertion. You are a bit lacking in tactfulness and in general reflective ability. Remember that "wilful haste makes woeful waste." You have a healthy degree of selfishness and a by no means inadequate opinion of your own abilities. Perhaps you might cultivate a bit more modesty. You are not afraid of work, and in general have the faculty of getting things done, though you are somewhat lacking in organizing ability.

Miss G. S., Victoria, B. C.—You are a very conventional and proper young lady, somewhat lacking in originality and initiative, but thoroughly high minded and wholesome. You have a dependable but rather slowly acting mind and are apparently in excellent health and general physical condition. You are prudent and careful and have a great deal of managing ability, though you would not make a good executive because of your lack of originality. You have the qualities of a fine homemaker.

R. G. M., Asheville, N. C.—Your writing indicates a large amount of aggressiveness and energy, which needs to be better controlled before you can develop a high degree of personal effectiveness. You are genial and friendly and have considerable ability at attracting and holding friends. You have a great deal of prudence and economy in money matters, but are rather likely to be "penny wise and pound foolish." The main faults visible in your writing are such as you will outgrow with years and experience, especially if you continue your education as you say you intend doing.

S. B., H. O. and Mrs. G. O., Elcho, Wis.
—S. B.'s writing shows capable intelligence and a hopeful optimistic attitude toward life. She is sympathetic and help-

ful to others, but does not allow her feelings to overcome her good common sense. H. O. is generous and liberal-minded, rather talkative and likely to act upon impulse. He has courage and a fair amount of ambition, but is rather lacking aggressiveness. He needs some inspirer to stimulate him to his best efforts. Mrs. G. O. is inclined to be nervous and sometimes irritable. She is a careful and prudent manager, but is not fitted to decide big questions or to make important decisions.

S. M., Throop, Pa.—You certainly have the intelligence and energy required for success in the work you speak of. But you seem to be rather lacking in foresight and push. Of course, you need more training and education in general. Why not try night school, or at least a course of reading which any librarian will give you on the industry in which you are engaged? This will start you on the way you apparently want to go.

D. M., Hamberg, N. D.—You have an agreeable and friendly disposition and a satisfactory degree of ambition and self-confidence. You are not exactly selfish, but you are disposed to look out for number one and are not easily deceived or influenced against your better judgment. In fact, you might do well to guard against your tendency to suspect the straightforwardness and sincerity of others.

M. McD., Hamberg, N. D.—You are essentially a doer, and you are disposed to be rather over-confident and hasty. You have a keen, active mind and an excellent sense of harmony and proportion. You would make a good manager, but you should have a prudent and careful partner to hold you back from rash and ill-considered action. You have a healthy degree of selfishness combined with a capacity for warm-hearted and sympathetic friendship.

H. E. F., Wichita Falls, Texas.—Your writing indicates a taste for mechanics and a considerable amount of constructive ability. You are of the studious and thoughtful type, rather than the active and aggressive. You are disposed to be close-mouthed, even secretive, though you are ordinarily genial and friendly about matters of only everyday concern. Some inventive talent and originality are indicated, but you seem to lack the energy and aggressiveness to make them particularly effective. It is of course futile to tell a fellow to haul himself up by his bootstraps, but you have possibilities that it would be criminal not to cultivate.

H. W. R., Evansville, Ind.—Your writing shows a conventional and rather colorless personality, unrelieved by any strong individualizing characteristics, either good or bad. You can usually be counted upon to do the correct and proper thing. This is by no means a fault; but you will get more out of life by cultivating a bit of individuality.

H. A., Ukiah, Calif.—Your writing indicates rather more nervous than physical energy, though you are apparently in excellent health and good physical condition. You have an active, intelligent mind of the intuitive rather than the closely logical type. Emotionally, you are a bit unstable, likely to be carried away by the enthusiasms of the moment. But you have a wholesome degree of selfishness and

power of reflection that should keep you on a fairly even keel. You have the ability to inspire confidence in others and, better still, the ability to retain this confidence by faithful effort and devotion. You should be valuable as a confidential secretary.

M. W., Westminster, Md.—You are of the intellectual and reflective, rather than the active go-getting type. You have a keen analytic mind and considerable ability at "sizing people up" and detecting their motives and desires. You have excellent health and a sturdy, dependable physique, though you are apparently not much inclined to athletics or outdoor life. Perhaps you would do well to cultivate this side. You would also do well to cultivate a bit more aggressiveness and push.

M. F., Ft. Smith, Ark.—You are self-confident and rather complacent; in fact, you carry your attitude of independence and self-sufficiency almost to the point of eccentricity. But you are really quite desirous of the approval and affection of others, though you are not always willing to return it in kind. You have a considerable artistic gift of a decorative sort.

Mrs. M. B., Pleasantville, N. J.—You are a person of strong but well-controlled emotions. However, you are quite vivacious and companionable, and will attract many friends who will find you sympathetic and helpful. You have an excellent sense of the fitness of things and a fine appreciation of the real values of life. But you are rather too fond of having your own way!

E. F. A., Baltimore, Md.—You are a very conservative and conventional young lady, but possess a lively and agreeable disposition. You are disposed to be rather talkative and should cultivate more originality in order to make your conversation worth while as well as pleasantly agreeable. You are well fitted for a business career in which you are required to carry out the plans and designs of another. This you will do well and thoroughly.

A. E. R., Jonesville, Wis.—Your writing indicates that you are largely governed by your feelings and emotions; you need to develop great self-control and hard-headedness. You are also lacking somewhat in foresight and prudence, though you are by no means rash or foolhardy. You have a fairly active and capable mentality, and with proper concentration should be successful at any ordinary business or occupation.

J. L. L., St. Anthony, Idaho.—Your writing indicates a high degree of artistic feeling and appreciation, but very little originality or creative power. Almost fastidious personal refinement is indicated, though your character and disposition are by no means feminized. You have an active and vivid imagination and a generally optimistic attitude toward life. You should do well in music or in one of the decorative arts.

A. L. G., Brooklyn, N. Y.—The frequently recurring straight lines in the endings of your words indicate a character of the forceful, dominating type. This is backed up by many indications of energy and personal effectiveness. You are not particularly emotional, and your head rather than your heart rules. There are indications that you would make an excellent mother or a wise guardian for

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children. You are generous and liberal-minded and are not troubled by petty details and worries. You should be admirably fitted for teaching or social service work, and you have the qualifications for managing a business of your own.

Mrs. P. R. J., Oxford, O.—You are of the rather easy-going, genial and friendly type, not easily hurried or worried. The very slight, yet quite perceptible tendency to "backhand" style indicates a capacity for reserve and what had perhaps best be called lack of demonstrativeness. In any case you are very much the mistress of your feelings and emotions, though the position of your *i-dots* shows that you may occasionally yield to the impulse of the moment. You are apparently not at all calculating or influenced by other than straightforward motives. You have an efficient and dependable, but not a brilliant mind.

F. J. O'B., Oswego, N. Y.—You are of the energetic, rather impulsive type, likely to be hasty and somewhat inconsiderate. Your energy appears to be rather more mental than physical, though you are by no means physically deficient. You are honest and straightforward and capable of sincere unselfish friendship. Your mind is keen and active, but you have little originality or creative urge.

Mrs. A. L. A., Providence, R. I.—Many thanks for your good wishes. Your writing indicates a cheerful and optimistic disposition and a generally genial and friendly, but not effusive, attitude toward all. However, there are indications that you are fond of having your own way and that you usually have the tact and presence of mind required to get it. The widely spaced lines indicate a liberal mind and a fondness for ease and luxury. Narrow margins indicate prudence and economy in money matters.

J. E., Pontiac, Mich.—You have a generous and frank disposition and possess a great love of outdoor life and for good books and music. You have very strong likes and dislikes, but you are usually able to exercise good control over both, and are apparently in little danger of letting them affect adversely your chances in life. You are a devoted and helpful friend and a straightforward upstanding enemy. You are not lacking in idealism, but you like to consider yourself a hard-headed and practical man of the world; which, in general, you are. You should do well in any work that requires you to meet and please the public.

L. M., Helena, Montana—You have a generous, pleasure-loving disposition, with a tendency to extravagance in ideas and actions, though you are disposed to be rather canny where money matters are concerned. You should make it a point to read good books, see good pictures, and cultivate the artistic side of your nature in general. It seems to be starved. You are apparently in good health at present, but there are disquieting indications of the possibility of some physical disorder that may increase with time. How long is it since you have had a thorough physical examination? Don't be scared; but go and have another one soon.

C. M., Indianapolis, Ind.—Your writing indicates a wholesome and straightforward personality, with a love of comfort and repose. You are careful with money, but you value it for the things it will buy rather than for itself. In spite

of your love of ease, you have the personal effectiveness of the woman who knows what she wants and is not afraid to go and get it. You are rather lacking in imaginativeness and spirituality; but this is the usual defect of the quality that makes you a clear sighted and practical woman of the world.

R. T., Scranton, Pa.—You are doing the very thing that I advised L. P. Jr., above to avoid. Quit looking inside yourself and develop some active outside interests. You have gone further along the road of introspection than he has, but it is never too late to mend. Self-examination is a good thing, but too much of it is paralyzing to initiative and effectiveness. Have you ever read the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*? If not, buy a copy of it at once and make it your bible for a while. Try to develop some of the hard-headed practicality that made him one of the greatest men our country has ever produced.

E. R. B., Portsmouth, Va.—Your writing indicates an admirable degree of decisiveness and self-control. It also shows a fine sense of proportion and balance, though you may at times display a trifle too much cocksureness and confidence. However, you will usually look before you leap. You are disposed to generosity and liberality both in thought and action. You have good musical and literary taste, and should be able to develop some ability as a performer in either line.

A. H., Independence, Mo.—You are somewhat lacking in energy and forcefulness, and are inclined to uncertainty in thought and action. You have a sincere and generous disposition, and, unless you correct the faults I have just named, you will probably always be your own worst enemy. You have a very considerable amount of ambition and idealism which will certainly pull you up to a high and personal effectiveness if you only get behind it with a sufficient amount of clear-sighted purpose and energy.

M. E. L., Port Arthur, Texas.—Your writing shows an earnest, hard-working disposition, sincerity and genuineness. But, unfortunately, you seem to lack the spark of force or individuality—some call it "pep"—that is needed for personal effectiveness. Of course, reading and association with intelligent and cultured people will help you in overcoming this handicap. You are rather self-conscious and not at all self-assertive. It would pay you to develop the opposites of these qualities.

A. S., Oxford, Ohio.—You are ordinarily a rather indolent and easy-going young man, but you are capable when aroused of displaying a good deal of energy and aggressiveness. You are of somewhat emotional disposition and easily influenced through your feelings. You might have them under better control. You are very fond of having your own way, and can be very disagreeable when you do not get it; but usually your disposition is genial and friendly. You should do well in one of the sciences, perhaps chemistry. But you will have to develop greater powers of concentration.

T. M. R., Chicago.—Of course, you should write in the "hand" that is easiest and most convenient for you. I should judge that it is the one you use "at home." Graphologically, there is little to choose between the two. Both show an active, alert mentality and a cheerful,

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genial disposition. You are disposed to take things rather easily and are perhaps a bit overfond of luxuries and the merely physical elegances of life. You will do well to remember that true happiness comes not from serving ourselves but from serving others.

S. A. K., Ashley, Pa.—Your optimism and aggressiveness should fit you well for a business career, especially since you seem to be provided with sufficient intelligence and force to back it up. You might, with proper training, do well in writing of the commercial, not the artistic, sort. You have good powers of observation and an adequate amount of idealism and ambition.

R. B., Ottawa, Ont., Can.—Your writing shows a smoothly functioning active and dependable intellect. You have a great deal of dignity and a fine sense of the fitness of things in general. You should shine in work that requires exact attention to detail and careful finish. You have good organizing ability, but are rather lacking in the aggressive push that should characterize the successful executive. You would do excellent work as the assistant to an erratic but gifted genius.

Mrs. J. H. M., Detroit, Mich.—I appreciate your interest in the department. Your writing shows an ambitious and optimistic disposition and a character of great natural refinement. You have some tendency to be somewhat over particular, especially in your estimate of the merits and conduct of others. You apparently have excellent health and you have a capacity for thorough and consistent effort. You are a careful and prudent manager, but are not "penny wise and pound foolish."

E. J. M., Brooklyn, N. Y.—You are a matter of fact, sensible sort of person who is disposed to take life much as he finds it. You need to cultivate more power of reflection and analysis; of course it would be a great mistake to lose your common sense attitude, but there is little danger of your ever becoming captious and critical. You are optimistic and cheerful and have a fair amount of ambition and energy, but little originality or creative urge.

L. H., Chicago.—Your writing shows a sufficiently ambitious and optimistic nature, but one lacking in backbone and decision. You are ruled by your heart rather than by your head and need to cultivate a more "hard-boiled" attitude. However, you must cultivate also more tact and delicacy, for you have a tendency to be merely stubborn when you should compromise. The writing you send indicates self confidence and assurance and a fair degree of intelligence and general mental power. The writer likes to give advice and to direct the lives and actions of those about her. You will be lucky to get her back notwithstanding the irritating qualities of her disposition.

G. L. L., Lennoxville, Can.—You have a vigorous physique and a great deal of individuality with many possibilities of personal social effectiveness. But you must have the weight of responsibility to make you do your best work. Unfortunately you do not seem to have this assertiveness to put you ahead, without some special spur or encouragement. You need to cultivate more power of concentration and careful thinking. With this you should be successful in executive or professional work.

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D. A. H., Chicago.—Your writing indicates a strong vigorous nature, both physically and mentally. You have self confidence and a fair degree of assertiveness. Your mind is of the intuitive rather than the analytic type, but you are capable of concentration and of sustained mental effort. You are genial and friendly but dignified and self-possessed; you do not wear your heart on your sleeve. Excellent health is indicated; also a certain degree of artistic ability.

R. Mc., Maryville, Mo.—You have a great deal of curiosity, a restless and inquiring mind that will certainly lead you to success if its activity is properly directed. Unfortunately you are easily discouraged and inclined in general to be pessimistic and cynical. This, of course, you must overcome. You are disposed to be easy on yourself and are not exactly in love with good hard work. You are rather hypersensitive and as a rule do not like criticism. So you will probably say that I am all wrong!

A. M., Cleveland, O.—You have an affectionate and amiable disposition and are rather too likely to be influenced too much by others. You have a certain amount of shrewdness and business sense, but you need to cultivate the ability to look at things on a larger and broader scale. You have a good mind and are a reliable worker; what you need is to cultivate a spirit of independence and aggressiveness.

B. D., West Shokan, N. Y.—Your letter is very interesting and your writing presents an intriguing graphological problem which I may discuss in this department sometime. What you need mainly is self confidence, a determination to make the best of life in spite of the handicaps which you imagine will hold you back. You have very fine mental and spiritual gifts which, if capitalized and frankly developed, will lead you to a contentment and success that will satisfy you and impress others. Get rid of your "inferiority complex" and live your own life in the way you want to live it. If you want to be a hermit, be one; but don't be ashamed of it!

Any readers of this magazine who desire to have their character and personality interpreted through their penmanship should write, preferably in black ink on white paper, to Prof. Roger Derrick, Editorial Department REAL DETECTIVE TALES, 1050 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois.

If you have sent in a specimen of your handwriting for a reading, and do not find your answer in this issue, look for it in the next issue of REAL DETECTIVE TALES.



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22 CAL. RIFLE

Man-Hunting with a Dictionary

By STANLEY RUSHTON

PSYCHOANALYSIS, micro-photography, the radio and chemistry are already weapons of the man-hunters when they take to the trail. Now comes a loose-leaf dictionary, compiled by Captain Theodore Wood of the Philadelphia Detective Bureau, to play a vital part in tracking down a quarry also grown clever with science and technique in his preying upon mankind.

The collegiate youth and flapper, of course, grope frantically for new slang phrases merely to maintain social reputations as "wise-cracking kids," but Captain Wood and his men are constantly on the alert for a more sinister vernacular, jargon of the underworld. Here's an example:

"Slim had a pow and a shiv. He was laying alongside the engine in a flop on the lam."

Captain Wood's dictionary would reveal that "Slim" had a gun and knife and that he was smoking opium in a lodging house while in hiding.

These are the sort of words the detective captain has been jotting down for years and making a study of the lingo as if it were a foreign language. So important has this study of underworld vernacular become that the examiners of the Civil Service Commission in Philadelphia include tests in it for those patrolmen seeking to shed their "harness" and become plainclothes men.

An applicant, for instance, would probably be called upon to translate such a message as the above with a postscript to the effect that "Slim" was given a finif, just missing a sawbuck. After his next job he was laying in for a month. He went on the lam again, but they got a reader for him and he was taken. He sprang "Fats" who opened the jug with him.

This would mean that "Slim" was given a sentence of five years and narrowly escaped from one of ten years. After his next crime he was in hiding for a month. Then he went on the run again, but they issued a warrant for him and he was arrested. He took the full responsibility for the crime from "Fats" who had forced open a bank with him.

Strangely enough, the one word that is never heard in underworld conversations is "bandit." This type of criminal is referred to as a "gun" or "racket guy."

Practically every criminal pursuit is termed a "racket," with the bootlegger being classified as in the "legit" because his sales of liquor are regarded as perfectly honest and above-board by those who have complete disregard for any law.

Although "laying alongside the engine" means being ensconced beside an opium smoking layout, wooing of the poppy may also be referred to in the dives as "kickin' the bamboo around."

THUGS first began the creation of this jargon with the sole purpose of being able to converse in public without danger of a stranger following the conversation.

Naturally the police wish to detect a gunman by his talk and also learn what he is talking about.

Many of the words have remained long in use due to the complete lack of imagination possessed by the criminal. "Hot stuff" is still used to describe plunder which has only recently been stolen and therefore difficult of disposal except at a low price offered by the "fence" or receiver of stolen goods.

"Boosters" are shoplifters, and dope addicts are "junkies" or "sleigh riders." Cocaine, heroin or morphine is "junk" or "white stuff."

A "scratcher" is a forger, and a "big mittman" is a confidence man, while a "keister getter" is a thief who steals suitcases or packages from parked automobiles or at railroad station waiting-rooms.

New words appear only at lengthy intervals because of a lack of creative ability possessed by the crook. This lack is best illustrated in the card index record files at the detective bureaus, where aliases trail behind the name of the criminal until little space is left on the back of rogues' gallery photograph for further description.

There have been criminals, it is said, who have used so many aliases that they actually forgot their real names.

The moniker of the underworld is assumed when the boy who goes wrong is initiated into the crook fraternity and resolves to cast aside his own name and adopt another. He may adopt another, but more often it is thrust upon him with a geographical prefix such as "Boston Whitey," "Chicago Slim" or "Frisco Fats." If he be youthful, the newcomer may more than likely have "kid" as a suffix, such as the "Omaha Kid" or the "Atlanta Kid." If his manners be polished he may be bestowed with the title of "Count" or if exceedingly careless in that respect would doubtless earn the sobriquet of "Greasy."

The crook in adopting an alias desires, naturally, to conceal his identity as much as possible. "What a sweet thing it would be for the cops," he reasons, "if all the boys used their right names when they went out to pull a job."

With the same stupidity which will be found in the ranks of all supposed "smart crooks," he never stops to reason that no matter what names he may adopt his real identity will be revealed when police start checking back into his past, becoming more eager in the probe as each new alias is discovered.

A study of the aliases will show laziness as well as the lack of imagination. If, for instance, the thief's name is Dodson, in taking an alias, he will call himself Dodd. If his name were Jacobs, he would be apt next to pose as Jacobson. His list of aliases becomes a list of variations of the same word. It may be that he does this in order to better remember his fictitious names as he adopts them. But he is a sorry creator of names, and those he uses are as commonplace as the worn bricks of a sidewalk.

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a little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, used with above for Bird Calls, etc. Anyone can use it.

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A REAL STARTLER. This is the most popular of all secret tricks. The device you use looks so fresh and sweet that everyone is tempted to inhale the delightful perfume. Then the most delightful surprise is revealed. Don't they jump? Rubber tube that easily reaches to the bottom of your coat or trousers, and the bulb is large enough to make a dash about with one loading. PRICE 25c each, or 3 for 75c postpaid.

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Microscope for examining the wonders of nature. It is also an Opera Glass, a Stereoscope, a Burning Lens, a Reading Glass, a Telescope, a Compass, a Pocket Mirror, and a Large telescope to locate even one painful cinder in the eye. Folds flat and fits the pocket. Something great—you need one. Don't miss it. Sent by mail, postpaid. Price, only 35c or 3 for \$1.00 postpaid.

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LOOK AT THESE BIG EARNINGS



L. C. Van Allen, of Illinois, says: "Before I accepted the ZANOL Agency I was making \$100 a month, but now I average more than that a week. My profit last week was \$125 clear, so you can't blame me for being so enthused about the business."



Mrs. K. R. Roof, of South Carolina, is the ZANOL Representative in her spare hours. She has found this work more pleasant and profitable than school-teaching. The very first week she cleared over \$50 profit, and she has made as high as \$15 in a single afternoon.



Henry Albers, of Ohio, had worked at many different things, all without success. As a ZANOL Representative he has made \$47 profit in one day—more than he ever earned in a week.



Mrs. G. H. Michelsen, of Nebraska, says: "I have made more money since I have been your representative than I ever earned before. One afternoon, in about an hour and a half I made a clear profit of \$16."

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

For nineteen years The American Products Company has given every one a fair and square deal, perfect satisfaction. Any man or woman who becomes my agent can expect humane treatment, every kindness and courtesy and co-operation to the full. Our record of honest dealings and our resources of over a million dollars guarantee that every promise we make will be fulfilled.

(Signed) Albert Mills
President.

I MEAN what I say! This is your chance to make *real money—in short hours—with an easy, delightful proposition—in a business of your own—that is permanent and profitable!* Here is a splendid chance for you to make big profits right from the start without investment or previous experience!

Amazing New Profit Opportunity

Never before have you been offered such a chance to make big money! It's the chance of a lifetime! My representatives are making big profits everywhere. Edgar Morris earned \$210 clear, cold, cash profit in his first two weeks as my representative. Christopher Vaughn made \$125 in a week. Edward Belding cleared \$25.60 in eight hours. Mrs. B. L. Hodges makes \$18 to \$20 a day. Mrs. Clara Stiteler earned \$17.66 in less than an hour. M. P. Stetar averages \$18 profit a day.

No Experience or Money Needed

These people knew nothing about my business when they started. They invested no money. And yet, their earnings reached big figures in an amazingly short time. You can easily make as much money as they did! And you don't need cash, experience or previous training! I furnish everything you need to make \$100 a week. I tell you what to do, where to go, and how to make *real money!* With my simple instructions you can be making \$100 in a week in a very short time!

Make Big Money Quick

I have the largest business of its kind in the world. I make more than 350 quality products. They are the famous ZANOL Products you've seen advertised for years. For nineteen years I have been serving and satisfying thousands upon thousands of customers. I never sell through stores—only through representatives! Thus I save money for my customers—and protect my representatives from competition.

Thousands of housewives buy ZANOL Products. As my agent you take care of my customers—send their orders to me—and collect your profits! Your commissions can start within a week after you first write to me.

You can work when, where and as much as you please. You are your own boss. Your earnings are limited only by the amount of time you devote to your business. As people learn you are the ZANOL Representative, they will send all their orders for our products through you. That's how your profits mount—your business increases month by month.

Get Your Share of Two Million Dollars

ZANOL business has grown by leaps and bounds. It has doubled in two years. This year my representatives will make \$2,000,000 as their profit. You can have your share. You will be amazed at how easy it is—at how quickly the money rolls in. You will realize that \$100 a week is not hard to make if you're in the right line.

Exclusive Territories Open

I have many desirable territories open now. If you act quick I will assign one to you. I will give you exclusive rights to the ZANOL business in that territory. This is a valuable franchise. It means *extra* profits to the men and women who get it. So write quick before vacancies are all filled!

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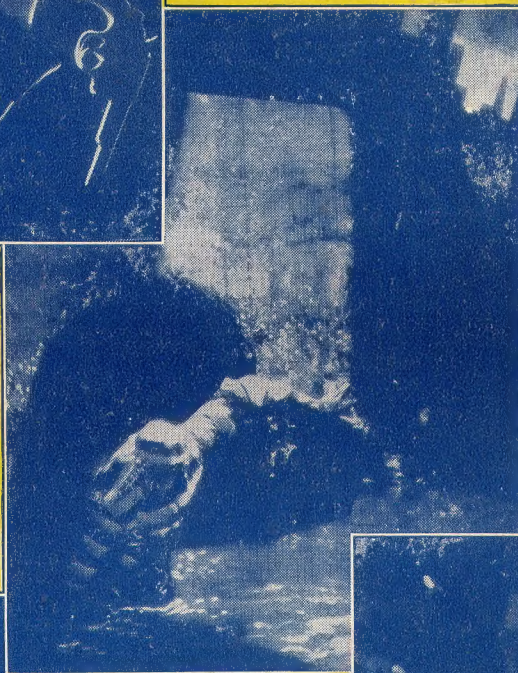
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